

Sight and Sound

The sixties:

'Blow-up'

Lindsay Anderson

'Who Needs a Heart'

Sexuality:

Rape revenge movies

'Basic Instinct'

Filming heroes:

Stephen Hawking's

'Brief History'

Tony Richardson:

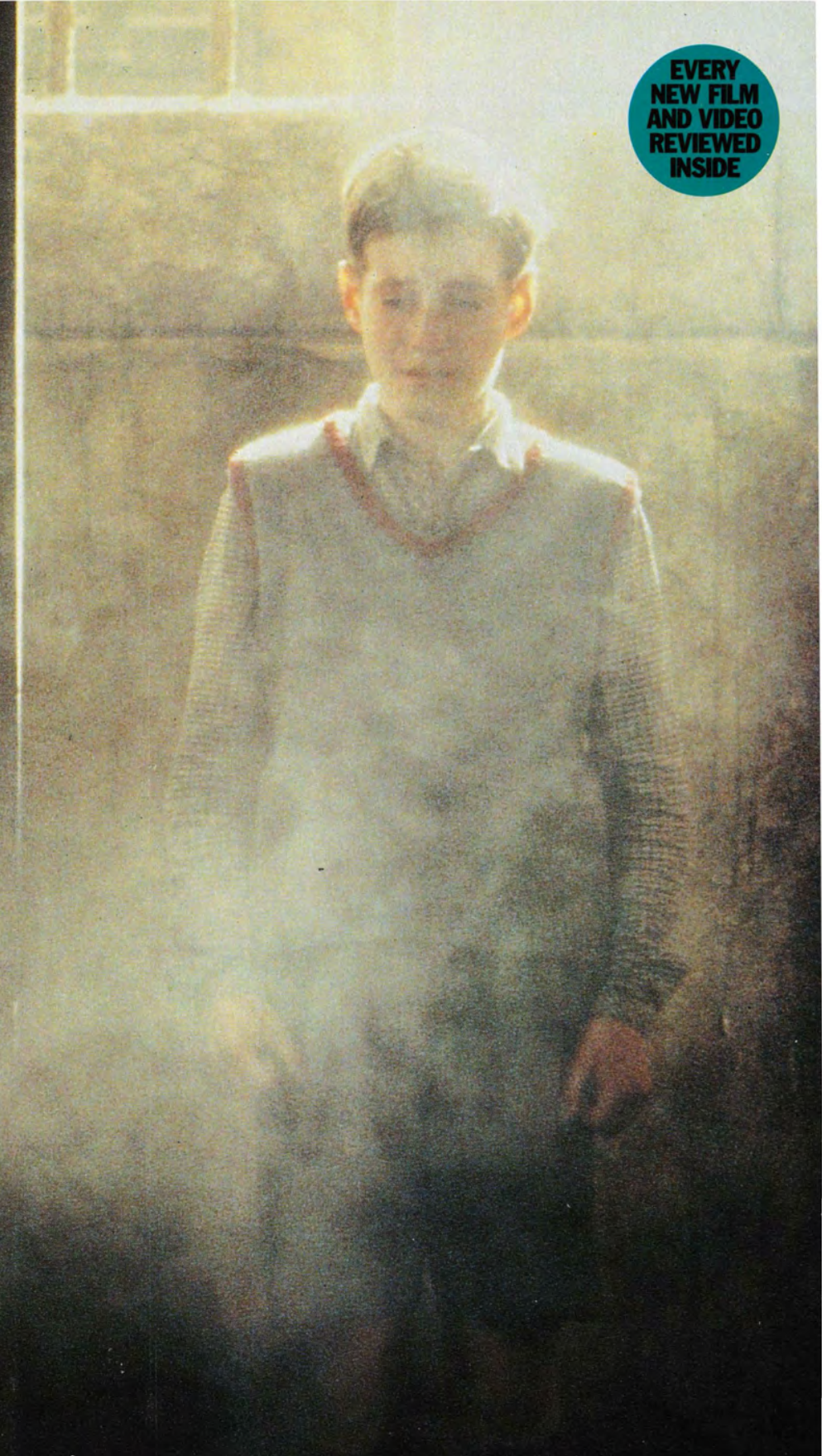
Vanessa Redgrave and

Charles Wood remember

'The Charge of the

Light Brigade'

EVERY
NEW FILM
AND VIDEO
REVIEWED
INSIDE



Caught in time

Terence Davies

'The Long Day Closes'



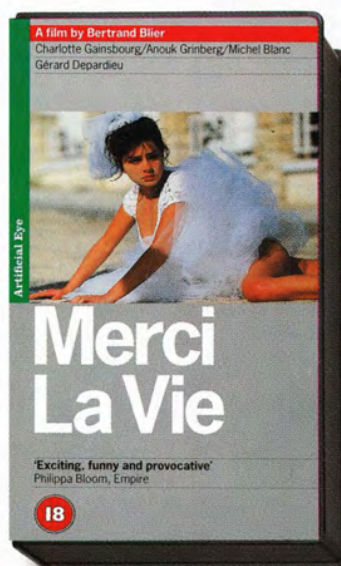
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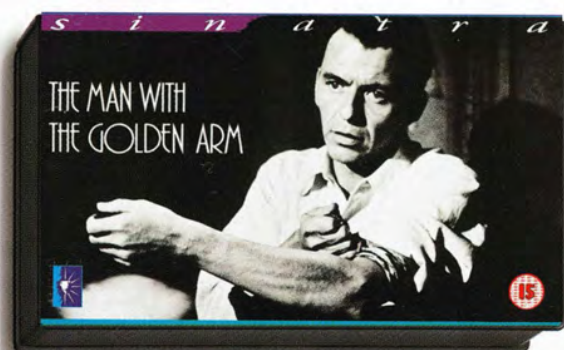
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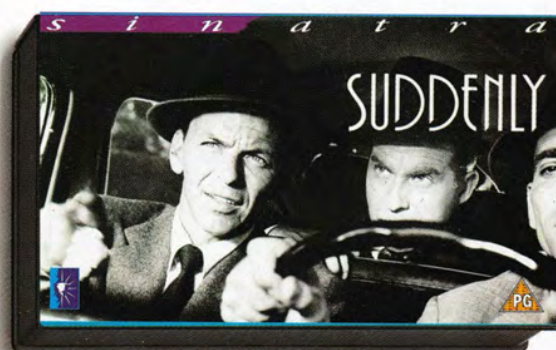
MY GIRLFRIEND'S BOYFRIEND The last of Eric Rohmer's 'Comedies and Proverbs' series is an entrancing comedy of love and mismatched desire. When the shy Blanche befriends Lea, she also meets Lea's boyfriend Fabien and their handsome friend Alexandre. Between them, the four endure a series of misunderstandings and deceptions but their true feelings are revealed in a beautifully played finale.



MERCI LA VIE Bertrand Blier's most audacious film to date stars Charlotte Gainsbourg and Anouk Grinberg as two girls who become friends and set off on the road together to explore life. Blier's shifts in time and place, vivid use of colour and daring mix of music (from Beethoven to Jacques Brel) make this a dazzling film.



THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM Otto Preminger's controversial film was the first Hollywood picture to tackle the previously taboo subject of heroin addiction. Frank Sinatra excels as the addict and poker dealer trying to resurrect his life, whilst Kim Novak helps him through cold turkey. "Frank Sinatra has never given a better performance....this is a shattering, notable film" The Spectator.



SUDDENLY A taut, pacy thriller chronicling an attempt to assassinate the President when his train stops at a small Californian town. Frank Sinatra plays John Baron, the sadistic key conspirator whose gang mercilessly torture the hostage family who are trying to foil the assassination. "Sinatra becomes one of the most repellent killers in American screen history". Newsweek.

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Sight and Sound
(Incorporating Monthly
Film Bulletin)
Volume 2 Issue 1 (NS)
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London W1P 1PL
Telephone 071 255 1444
Facsimile 071 436 2327

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Annual subscription rates

UK £25.00
Europe/overseas
surface mail £30.00
Europe airmail £32.00
Overseas airmail £52.00
Special rates apply to BFI
members, details available
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For queries regarding your
subscription contact:
Subscription department
Sight and Sound, 3rd Floor
3/4 Hardwick Street
London EC1R 4RY
Telephone 071 837 7765
Facsimile 071 278 8776

Binders for one year's issues:
UK £7.00. Overseas surface mail
£9.00. Available from Sight and
Sound marketing department

Sight and Sound is part of the
Research Division, BFI



Published monthly by the
British Film Institute
ISSN 0037-4806

Sight and Sound



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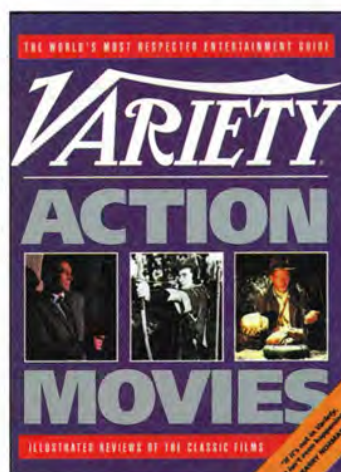
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Following the successful launch of the Variety Movie Guide in Autumn 1991, Octopus and Variety are continuing their publishing partnership with the release of two new illustrated guides, each of which focuses on a specific movie genre: action and adventure; and comedy.

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Nostalgia

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Charles Wood's many plays include *Veterans*, which takes place on a film set
Benjamin Woolley's book on virtual reality will be published this year

On the first anniversary of the new *Sight and Sound*, it seems appropriate to reflect on what we have been trying to do. If the decision to relaunch a cinema magazine in the middle of a recession might be seen as optimistic, the magazine's commitment to the principle that cinema not only has a past, but also a present and a future, may seem simply unrealistic. After all, it is not only critical orthodoxy that says that the best cinema is in the past. Even the new batch of releases have an elegaic air about them, as though they were witnesses at cinema's wake. Not only does Jacques Rivette's *La Belle Noiseuse*, discussed in last month's issue, fall into this category, but so does Steven Spielberg's *Hook*, with its deliberate nostalgic return to 'Edwardian' England and to the swashbuckling films of earlier cinema. Terence Davies' *The Long Day Closes* has its own particular elegaic quality; awash with sounds of the radio and haunted by snatches of cinema, it is set during 1955-56, the period when commercial television came into being, helping to ensure that television displaced cinema from the centre of the popular imagination. From such films, as well as from a litany of world-weary reviewers and critics, it might be reasonable to conclude that the Long Day of Cinema is closing.

As has been clear from the first editorial a year ago ("start from the bad new things" rather than "nostalgia for the good old things"), this magazine is opposed to such melancholy. Of course some people jumped to the conclusion that this meant that the magazine had no time for the past, even though to start from the new does not entail staying with it, and to refuse to indulge in *nostalgia* for the good old things is not the same as paying them no attention. And as the content of the magazine has subsequently shown, there has been no indifference to history – whether it takes the form of DeMille or the UFA studios, Renoir or Ghatak, *Spartacus*

or *Belle de Jour*, Vertov or Bill Douglas.

But the historical concerns of the magazine are defiantly not those of a curator who sees the cinema of the past primarily as a heritage that needs to be preserved. While such an imagination is invaluable – and is represented most explicitly within the BFI by MOMI and the archive – it is not, of course, the only historical stance in an institution devoted to the development of film and television. The interest of this magazine in the past is explicitly shaped by present concerns – hence Bertolucci and television; exploitation movies and sexuality; the aesthetics of documentary; DeMille and orientalism; the gangster film and ethnicity; Renoir and national identity; Bill Douglas and Scottishness.

But there still remains the thorny issue of the responsibility of the historically informed imagination to current cinema – including popular US cinema. One very common stance – not ours – has been to refer such cinema back to the Great Tradition and find it wanting. The assumptions of this magazine have been very different, not least because any historical enquiry into the supposed Great Tradition will reveal that it is partially constituted by films and cinemas that were dismissed as low or commercial ephemera on their release.

There is also the fact that certain cinemas are 'emergent' and have no long uninterrupted history – for example Palestinian cinema in Europe or black British cinema, both subjects covered in the magazine. These hybrid cinemas need to have critical support *now* if they are to have a future.

Of course this is not to say that there isn't an argument to be had about the shape of cinema to come. But in the end it is better to have a historical imagination which has a nostalgia for the future than one which retreats into the past at the first sign of threatening times.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry, Katzenberg was saying Hollywood wasn't what it was, but I remember what it was, and it wasn't what they say it was; not to say now is any better, in many ways now is worse, but it's still better than it was when it was bad – if you get my meaning.'

Fantastic projections

J. Hoberman

The mirrored ceiling is standard boudoir issue in Paul Verhoeven's *Basic Instinct* – a movie that's been refracted through the American media for so long, it seems to get off on watching itself. The camera somersaults out of the looking glass in the very first shot to focus on a naked couple grinding loins on silken sheets. She straddles, ties his wrists to the bedpost, then arches her back to rebound with an ice pick... Clearly, Verhoeven wants to give new meaning to the phrase over the top.

More inadvertently self-revealing than effectively malign in positing a sinister conspiracy of rich, beautiful, man-slashing crypto-lesbians, *Basic Instinct* is a film whose goofball preening is exceeded only by its ham-fisted dialogue. Offering his instant diagnosis of the ice-pick killer, a forensic psychologist tells the cops who found the grisly remains that they're "dealing with a devious, diabolical mind... a deep-seated obsessional hatred... someone very dangerous and very ill". Yeah, like the murderer and who else?

Reaping a whirlwind of publicity (and violently mixed notices in the daily press), *Basic Instinct* grossed \$15 million on its opening weekend to displace the teen comedy *Wayne's World* at the top of the national box office charts, before being succeeded by Ron Shelton's basketball buddy drama *White Men Can't Jump*. In New York, where it was released the same day as *Edward II* (to the most respectful reviews Jarman has ever received here) and a report detailing the rise in gay-bias victim attacks, *Basic Instinct* was protested against by a coalition of gay and lesbian groups – as it had been while in production last spring. Still, the movie's basic instinct is not simply homophobia. As expulsive as the opening attraction proves to be, it's a veritable geyser of pathology.

Basic Instinct is nominally set in San Francisco (and thus an anthology of allusions to *Vertigo*, *Bullitt* and *Dirty Harry*) but actually unfolds in the realm of unfettered desire. The atmosphere of super-consumption – the cops operate out of posh executive offices, interrogate suspects in a junior version of the Pentagon war room – is reinforced by the full panoply of ostentatious dolly and crane shots, the carefully dappled light that falls across the elevators, the casually superfluous helicopter overheads. (The film's budget has been put at \$49 million.)

As with *RoboCop* and *Total Recall*, Verhoeven places a Hollywood genre between quotation marks. It's as if he gave the routine *policier* the same madcap treatment he accorded middle-period Bergman in his last Dutch feature, *The Fourth Man*; as a thriller, *Basic Instinct* is more baroque twisted than it is suspenseful, closer to De Palma than to Hitchcock. The biggest tension-builder is the shot-countershot montage that precedes cop Michael Douglas' going down on suspect Sharon Stone in one of the film's hyper-theatrical hot and slurpy sex scenes.

A hardboiled wiseguy who leads with his putz, Douglas here synthesises all previous roles from *Fatal Attraction* and *The War of the*

Roses to Black Rain and the long-running television series, *The Streets of San Francisco*. He's a superego tied into a pretzel, a cop with an addictive personality who consistently does the wrong thing – most spectacularly, we gather, when two tourists wandered into his line of fire. (It's also suggested that he drove his wife to suicide.) As a result, *Basic Instinct* opens with Douglas in a heightened state of deprivation, having temporarily given up cigarettes, sex, booze and cocaine.

American movies, at least those directed by Howard Hawks, used to make a fetish of professionalism. *Basic Instinct* is almost delirious in celebrating the absence of ethics. Or maybe it's a form of social criticism. The movie is so opportunistic it could be taking place in the brain of Donald Trump – this fantasyland is sprinkled with sleaze instead of Disneydust. Sentenced to psychiatric care after the tourist incident, Douglas sleeps with the police psychologist assigned to be his therapist (Jeanne Tripplehorn) while she, in turn, circulates his confidential file – ultimately sold off to Stone's mystery novelist-cum-murder suspect, who explains that writers are amoral by nature.

This blithe lack of scruples has been recapitulated after a fashion both by Verhoeven's bland assertion that the crypto-lesbians are the movie's most positive characters and Joe Eszterhas' campaign to distance himself from a script for which, despite its being a virtual retread of his *Jagged Edge*, he received \$3 million. But the scenario also evokes the paranoid domestic mindfuck of *Total Recall*, and chief among the movie's cartoonish pleasures is the spectacle of Stone playing Madonna to Douglas' Arnold. With her repertoire of Lilith wiles and vampire smiles, Stone gives the snakiest performance since Amanda Donohoe in *The Lair of the White Worm*.

Stone is the ultimate bad girl – it's interesting that, in general, men (straight and gay) have been far more disapproving of the film than have women. In every instance, the Stone character flaunts her transgressive power. Questioned by the police, she not only brazenly smokes in a no-smoking zone and confounds six seasoned cops (their faces pouring sweat into the camera) with frank sex talk, but also reveals that she's donned her miniskirt sans knickers. (As the guys say in *Wayne's World* "Shw-i-i-ing!") Whether or not the scene sells the movie, it's enough to send Douglas pirouetting off the wagon into a rough sex *pas de deux*: "You've never been like that before", Tripplehorn observes after he brings her home, slams her against a wall, kisses her, rips apart her underwear, kisses her again, then pushes her face down on to a chair and takes her from behind.

From the Douglas perspective, *Basic Instinct* is one long confusing come-hither look. (To reinforce the point, Dorothy Malone periodically traipses out of the woodwork to reprise her 50s impersonation of nympho excitement – rubbing her back against the wall, sucking in her cheeks, batting her bedroom eyes.) Stone pals around with female multiple-murderers – as op-



He's a superego tied into a pretzel, a cop with an addictive personality who consistently does the wrong thing – most spectacularly, we gather, when two tourists wandered into his line of fire

posed to killers of multiple females – and, perhaps, lives out her best-sellers. She explains her relentless interest in Douglas in terms of a work-in-progress about a detective who "falls for the wrong woman" and gets himself killed. It's the boudoir-mirror principle, life imitating art imitating life...

Ultimately, Douglas will propose an alternative ending to Stone's scenario: "How about we fuck like minks, raise rug rats, and live happily ever after". Too bad for him, the completed manuscript is already spewing out of her printer.

"My wife says it comes out of all my sexual fantasies", has been Eszterhas' convoluted explanation for *Basic Instinct*. Mrs E notwithstanding, the women here are all infinitely manipulative. Douglas is confused by two duplicitous shrinks – Stone's character having graduated from Berkeley with a double major in literature and psychology. Every female in the film is not only a possible or actual killer, but also a potential lesbian. The running joke is that each, however, can be temporarily awed by the power of Douglas' wand. The most comic demonstration of this feat comes after the first Douglas-Stone tryst when, having spent the night watching the action, Stone's leather-clad consort (Leilani Sarelle) materialises in the bathroom and Douglas out-machos her, bare ass to the viewer.

As this coy camera placement suggests, it is Douglas who is the movie's real love object – his reported \$14 million paycheck dwarfs Eszterhas'. (It is also Douglas who has been pressed into service to give *Basic Instinct* a 'progressive' – or at least – 'libertarian' – reading.) So, is the movie being homophobic or naturalistic when it gives his lumberingly faithful partner (George Dzundza) an unrequited crush? Deducting that Douglas has been to bed with Stone, Dzundza is just as jealous as Sarelle: "God-dam sonofabitch, you fucked her. How could you fuck her!" That this public tantrum was evidently shot at a gay and lesbian country-western bar called Rawhide II suggests that Verhoeven, at least, understood the implications of the scene.

Less homophobic than misogynist, more ridiculous than not, *Basic Instinct* is full of fantastic projections – with all manner of doubling, evil twins and shadow selves. (There's even a character named 'Hoberman', although I consider this less an acknowledgment of my panning of Eszterhas' *Music Box* than a reference to the Touchstone president.) If half the murders go absurdly unsolved – well, Freud would understand that too. Just what do these women want? The lesbian activity, such as it is, is a surplus of sexual heat, a factor of an overall female uncanniness, the manifestation of a male's fear that he might be expendable.

Basic Instinct is undoubtedly exploitative, but it's also unsettling – it's as if the female sex toys in a garden-variety porn flick suddenly developed an unpredictable, shocking, vengeful autonomy. "Funny how the subconscious works", somebody muses late in the film. I dare say, it's a riot. One man's basic instinct is another's high anxiety.

Hoaxes and hopes

Andreas Kilb

You may want to see a big German movie this year – one like Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Lili Marleen*, Volker Schlöndorff's *The Tin Drum* or Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*. Or you may want to discover the low-budget, leftist, feminist, homophilist, hot-blooded black and white directorial debut of a German maverick film-maker – someone like Alexander Kluge, Edgar Reitz or Schlöndorff in the mid-60s, Fassbinder, Herzog or Wenders in the early 70s or Margarethe von Trotta and Helma Sanders-Brahms at the end of that decade.

This year, you won't find either. German cinema has arrived an all-time low. Since 1982, when Fassbinder left his last masterpiece, *Querelle*, to an uncomprehending public and Wim Wenders picked up the Venice Festival's Golden Lion with his *State of Things*, the auteur movement that led Vincent Canby to proclaim the 80s a "German decade" has been in rapid decline. Today, some of the work of young film-makers looks older than the old films of their elders. And the treadmills of television and film bureaucracy turn so slowly that film-makers often have to wait until they are in their mid-thirties – the age at which Fassbinder died – to get their first chance at directing.

German television in several cases provides a recompense for commercial losers, as Edgar Reitz discovered when he decided to realise his long-laboured project *Heimat* with the money and the means of the western federal state television network. The serial turned out to be one of the best products that German film could offer during the 80s.

Reitz's colleague, Hans W. Geissendörfer, went one step further with his melodramatic family serial, *Lindenstrasse*, the most successful prime-time television show in post-war Germany, with over 250 broadcasts. Television production now forms the basis of all Geissendörfer's high-minded yet unsuccessful cinematic attempts, as is the case with most of Germany's mixed-media directors.

Even so, the big-budget, big box office all-star movie has become a persistent myth in a film culture which used to encourage the very opposite. When Helmut Dietl's DM15 million comedy *Schtonk* came out in mid-March, critics hailed the film as the "beginning of a new era in German cinema". Unfortunately, *Schtonk*, which is based on the true scandal of the forged Hitler diaries published as authentic by the German weekly magazine *Stern* in 1986, looks exactly like the routine, medium-dry cinematic *hors d'oeuvre* you might expect from Dietl, who is famous for his witty television serials. But the sheer enormity of the budget, which is well above average for German film production, seems to exercise a magic power on the critics. *Schtonk* reflects the ambitions of the sychophantic national film industry. And its success story has disturbing parallels with its storyline: in both cases, hoax is an essential part of the game.

The malaise affecting German cinema



The hoaxer in Helmut Dietl's acclaimed '*Schtonk*', based on the scandal of the faked Hitler diaries, above; the furore at the 'discovery', below

can be attributed to at least three different causes. One is the growing desire in Hollywood to export to foreign markets. Since the end of the 80s, American films have claimed a steady 75 per cent share of the German box office, while home-made product, which climbed to a temporary high of nearly 25 per cent in 1986, now reaps little more than 10 per cent of German spectators' money.

Another reason is the exodus of talent: directors like Wenders, Schlöndorff and Herzog no longer produce their films at home, but take their chance with European-American co-productions, or, whatever. *Until the End of the World*, *Homo Faber* (*Voyager*) and *Scream of Stone* may still look like German films (even very like German films), but they don't qualify as German cinema.

The third – and probably the most crucial – reason for the sinking morale of German cinema is the federal system. The split

of governmental power between the capital (Bonn) and the federal regions (in 1948) may well be a good thing for German democracy, but the idea that each region should produce and control its own film policy has proved almost fatal to the industry. In 1966 the government in Bonn tried to soften the effects by passing the first film subsidies bill, which established a central office in Berlin for the distribution of funds. But along with the auteur movement, the system collapsed.

In the 80s a lot of small regional funds were set up, each with its own regulations and bureaucracy. Today, no budget bigger than DM2 million can be financed without the aid of at least three different subsidy programmes. The producers have become cash collectors, while directors spend their time producing the accounts to justify their own artistic ruin. Meanwhile, the amount of fund money has reached the impressive sum of DM120 million a year. But still, the machine doesn't work...

Finally, I should say something about *Europa, Europa*, the Franco-German co-production that the German authorities failed to enter for the Oscar awards on the grounds that its director, Agnieszka Holland, is Polish. In Germany it takes a twenty-five-letter word – *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – to express the idea of coming to terms with the past. For *Europa, Europa* the message came across in four: history is bunk. Should I go on? Rather not. Forget *Europa, Europa* – *Schtonk* is waiting for you.

When Dietl's DM15 million comedy '*Schtonk*' came out, critics hailed it as "the beginning of a new era in German cinema"



The Naked Diners Club

Iain Sinclair

In 1959, *Naked Lunch*, a set of junk/sex routines from legendary lie-down comedian William S. Burroughs, was shuffled and edited by a team of friends and collaborators so that Maurice Girodias of Olympia Press could cash in on publicity ensuing from the suppression of the *Chicago Review*, where extracts from the book were due to appear. The author (mouthpiece, stooge fall guy) for this toxic collaboration between Dante and Lenny Bruce enjoyed what amounted to a posthumous reputation: the first reviews read like obituary notices. Journalists meeting Burroughs behaved as if they were interviewing a zombie. His masterpiece was variously interpreted as "Swiftian" satire (copywriters have yet to identify any other brand), a masturbatory *aide-memoire*, or a sequence of coded scripts transmitted by cockroaches from Mars.

It is generally accepted – by the literary pimps who trade in used snapshots – that Burroughs agreed to give his first public reading at the Mistral bookshop, Paris. When the day came, as Harold Norse reports, the man was "junk-sick". He sent a tape-recording as understudy. The tiny audience was captivated by this entirely appropriate paradigm of all future Burroughs happenings.

Another tiny audience gathered in a preview theatre to enjoy *Naked Lunch The Movie* were victims of the same three-card con Burroughs pulled at the Mistral bookshop. We sat through a chamber piece of modest ambition in which neither Burroughs, nor his most famous work, was present. We were offered in exchange a linear narrative composed of a sober critique of the writer's more notorious obsessions, restaged bioclips (highlights from the lowlife), and a slimy escalation of rubber horror metaphors for the author's fear of the typewriter.

If film in the 90s is defined as the art of burning somebody else's money, most of its aboriginal tent show impulses remain intact. You want prestige? Buy a good title, then throw away the book. The Beverly Hills rich are still different, but they are far from nouveaux. Taking possession of cult titles has become the ultimate form of book-collecting. It's much cheaper than a Matisse or a Chagall. And there are no insurance premiums. They've cracked *Ulysses*, gutted *Under the Volcano*, nibbled at a few lemon-scented extracts from Proust. *Naked Lunch* has to be the choicest tidbit left on the shelf. It's impossible. The producers admit it can't be done. A direct translation would devour the national debt of any self-respecting coke republic, and still be banned everywhere. Hanging orgies, dope freaks, vaudeville surgery... the *Titanic*? Forget it. Director David Cronenberg and producer Jeremy Thomas go for the easier option of tapping "the spirit of the book" while – get this – maintaining at the same time the discipline of a "traditional narrative structure... psychological and emotional development, the story told through the main character". In other words, the film disregards and deconstructs every moral and technical decision

Burroughs was born tired. Weller can only impersonate. He can never repossess. There is no active contact with a criminal consciousness. You can't set-dress the shabbiness of damaged lives

Burroughs made in assembling his text. Instead of "an endless novel which will drive everybody mad", we have a film openly representing itself as a promo for a debased cultural artefact. A sentimental journey through an intolerable past.

The film, the finite event that makes it on to the screen, is inevitably the ghost of a much grander concept, a spent rocket dragged back to earth. The octane is elsewhere. In the deal. That's what excites us. That's the alchemy. Good meetings. Great calls. Epic breakfasts. Networking that finally delivers 'William Seward Burroughs II' as a name above the title. He's been around for aeons on underground backlots as writer and performer. An out-take. Who remembers *Chappaqua*? It's much easier to get scripts published – in signed, numbered editions, with prelims by Ron Kitaj – than to persuade some proper person to shoot them. An anorexic fetish, a decadence: like promoting the rejected outlines of novels straight from the slush pile into hardcovers.

Naked Lunch was the pipedream, a grail for all the heads in town. They sidled up on it by way of *Junkie*, which optioned its reckless way through some notably shaky hands. Terry Southern and Dennis Hopper, according to Burroughs' biographer, Ted Morgan, "had the two worst reputations in Hollywood". Not only would they never eat lunch again, they couldn't even find the restaurant. Hopper "had a habit so bad that the bridge of his nose was misshaped and discoloured...". Southern, the triumphs of *Strangelove* a remote memory, cranked himself into shape on Brampton's Mixture ("which combined cocaine, morphine, alcohol, cherry syrup and water"). Script conferences for these boys were Bedlam at sixteen speeds: speaking-in-tongues, blue lip rhapsodies, escalating arias of threat, the magical invocation of hitmen, serial mutilation, cannibalism. How unlike the homelife of our own dear commissioning editors.

Burroughs, the elder statesman, Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, affects a good-natured disinterest in these antics. He's far too canny to involve himself in the time-wasting frivolities of script-doctoring. Cash up front. Let 'em pay for the brand name and butcher the rest any way they want. Like a retired frontier veterinarian, he's sitting this one out. "You write a part for James Coburn and you wind up with Liberace", he reported to Brion Gysin. But the author of *The Process*, calligrapher and cut-up pioneer can no longer be reached by air-mail. He didn't live to see himself impersonated by a white suit with Julian Sands attached to it. He might otherwise have been amused to see his complex relationship with Burroughs elided to a snatch of ambiguous two-shots, before he mutates into a brain-sucking rubber crawly in a parrot's cage.

Whatever palpitations of nostalgia Cronenberg sets in motion by pastiching fandom's Beatnik album (Ginsberg, Kerouac, Paul and Jane Bowles), his film is limited by its costume-design concept of history. Even the cast has been hired like props, because they have a proven heritage pedigree. Julian

Sands steps seamlessly out from his *Room with a View*. Ian Holm escapes from *Chariots of Fire* to the frying pan of 'Interzone' and marriage to a Jane Bowles impersonator. The film publicists do not need to point out that "all the clothes relate to the year 1953". They relate to 1953 as much as the style postcards of Marilyn Monroe relate to the experience of watching one of her films. If history does indeed operate in cycles, it has the unfortunate habit of returning dry-cleaned by the 'Merchants Ivory'. Burroughs champions a contrary notion: all ages, all crimes, are contactable in present time. We inhabit a shifting concertina of past and future lives, open to us through acts of control and sex magic. The elitism of this hierographic vision is not accessible through the efforts, however well intentioned, of a democratic art form. Cinema, the team game for fat cats, has no business with the hermeticism of the writer/magus.

Cronenberg's *fin de siècle* travelogue gets the suits right, the pinched light, the mustard-dust breath, the photofit faces. Peter Weller bravely attempts the impossible, underplaying the ancient-souled Burroughs. A floater pulled from the river would have more animation. Burroughs was born tired. Weller, although he manages very convincingly the hatchet-cheeked, whipped-cur look that reminded cinematographer Peter Suschitzky of "a character out of a painting by Otto Dix", can only impersonate. He can never repossess. There is no active contact with a criminal consciousness. You can't set-dress the shabbiness of damaged lives. It's too much like rolling new money in the dirt. We, the audience, know too much. We have been taken too often behind the scenes. The tricks have been explained to us. But time, in Burroughs' own films, is always an optional extra. Anytime is everywhere. The clothing is utterly unmemorable. It would never convince any self-respecting style analyst. Film clothes, unlike real clothes, outlive the people inside them.

Remove Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* from its spurious association with a great book and you're left with a lean, intelligent and enjoyable movie. One of the few for the grown-ups. But this divorce is impossible. The project came into being as the formal mating of dynasties: *Dead Ringers* meets *Dead Fingers Talk*. The crowd will not disperse until they have witnessed the bloody sheets.

Cronenberg is shortly to extend his collection of designer modernist classics by shooting J. G. Ballard's *Crash*. (These titles, along with *Clockwork Orange*, are what I would define as record company books. Names that decay into albums.) How much better advised talent scouts would be to pilage the canon of the literary underclass, where highly energised source books invite a collaboration of equal partners. Pulp written for loot, gun to temple, may be painlessly transformed, with no loss of karma, to cash once more. Too much respect kills a film at birth. The nature of contemporary cinema is such that it cannot, by definition, cope with the single most crucial element in the junkie's universe: boredom.

No Rapido change

Brian Winston

To boldly go where no television critic has gone before – into a largely uncharted territory where the subject is not the national television output but the world's. That is the mission of this column.

Apart from the occasional scholarly survey and the endless flow of syndicated US programming, television and television criticism remains essentially national in scope. In the age of satellite news services and transnational cable channels, this begins to look a touch limited as a response. So, taking judicious samplings via videocassette, here is an attempt at a broader view. Its subject is youth.

When Philadelphia's WFIL found that its teen music show *Bandstand* was a local hit in 1952, television discovered a way of capturing teenage interest. In the event, it has turned out to be the only way.

Bandstand, set in a record shop (as they were then), had kids dancing to the music, filmed clips of performers (now known as music videos), and a DJ host. It is a format that has proved durable with variations. The show survived transportation to ABC in 1957 as *American Bandstand* and became that network's longest-running series.

It is a format that also travels well. Hong Kong's *Solid Gold* (TVB) is a current prime-time version that differs from the original (or, come to mention it, from the UK's *Top of the Pops*) only in that the studio audience sits rather than dances. In France, *Top 50* (Canal Plus) loses the audience altogether, but still plugs the records.

Even when an ironic, not to say satiric tone is struck in such shows, it is still the record industry that calls the tune. The BBC's *Rapido*, for instance, shows a willingness to send up the *American Bandstand* heritage, but is clearly limited by the need to sell the discs and the concert dates. I'm too old to know whether or not the programme's irreverence encompasses the endless categorising of the bands – bubblegum pop, indy, industrial, rave, punk, cyberpunk, superpunk, Belgian Technorock, political rap, schizophrenic rock, angry young female rock, etc. I'd like to think my Old Grey Whistle Test was being blown, but I fear that *Rapido*'s paymasters are too strict for that.

The record-plugging show is a staple of the world's television schedules. In *American Bandstand*'s home, it has spawned a whole cable channel, MTV. Despite mid-80s post-modernist critical hype, MTV is still just plugging the discs – in so far as it can, that is. Never very popular, its prime-time viewership is now down to just over half a million American homes (0.5 per cent or so) and is falling. It's as if the young need no more than one show a week along these lines and a whole channel is overkill... as is anything but the music.

American Bandstand did not herald the development of a whole range of youth programming, despite the oft noted synchronicity of television and teenagers as post-Second World War phenomena. At the outset, in the 50s, in the West, a certain syl-



Facing the music: 'Rapido's Antoine de Caunes

logism developed: television is like rock in that both undermine traditional high culture; teenagers are addicted to rock; therefore teenagers will also be addicted to television. But teenagers (as a Western construct, at least) have proved resistant to television's lure – apart from rock, and that in small doses. It is only recently that some services have returned more intensively to the task of snaring the kids.

The strategy deployed in Britain and France is to 'strand' the music show with other programming. Thus *Rapido* is part of the strand *Def II*, which also contains the magazine series *Reportage*. In France, Antenne II has a strand, *Gyro*, which includes the magazine, *Une pêche d'enfer*.

These programmes play to the syllogism by assuming that young people will watch other items than music on television provided the material is presented with a certain oppositional zest. Unfortunately, the programme-makers seem to define zest, irreverence and zeal as a frenetic presentational style and zingy graphics. Writing on the screen might look like trendy information-overload to some; to me, it looks like a paradoxical way to reach a supposedly post-literate generation.

In the 50s a certain syllogism developed: television is like rock in that both undermine high culture; teenagers are addicted to rock; therefore teenagers will be addicted to television

The presenters on a recent episode of *Une pêche* were quick to describe a new Euro-wide version of Monopoly as "un jeu capitaliste", even as they pitched the thing. The show in question also sold the glories of a career as a Parisian fireman. *Reportage* devoted an edition to the cult of appearance which had a similar cake-and-eat-it feel. You can't accuse the fashion and beauty industries of shameless exploitation and sexism while at the same time telling your audience how to get jobs in them.

Achieving street credibility seems to be virtually impossible for television. Take *The Word* (Channel 4, UK). Although it went out at 11pm and was slanted at an older demographic than *Def II* and the other programming I have mentioned, it fits here because its presenters are either teenagers or figure heavily in British teen mags. It tries for credibility with a brand of cheap outrage. Despite *The Word*'s use of things like extracts from Stallone's and Costner's porno movies, its salaciousness is of the innocent, seaside picture postcard variety.

Real outrageousness would have demanded, for instance, that an item on cosmetic surgery for pets be played for laughs, instead of in the spirit of the RSPCA. And the show would not deploy its presenters, carefully differentiated by class as they are, as representatives of One (youth) Nation. In this, *The Word* is about as subversive as British wartime documentary: *Diary for Timothy*, say.

The point is that it has ever been thus. Street credibility does not leap from the small screen. Despite the lingering hysteria engendered by the protectors of culture forty and more years ago, television and youth do not mix – except when it comes to selling records. As one interviewee at a rave party in Long Beach covered by *Rapido* said, "It's not as underground as it used to be".

Well, no – it's on TV instead.



More than music: the 'Reportage' team, trying to market television to youth

Getting their due

Bombay

Karen Alexander

BIFF, the Bombay International Documentary and Short Film Festival, has yet to establish itself on the circuit of premier international festivals. But if its showing at this, the second of the now biennial gatherings, is anything to go by, then it will only be its scheduling (between Rotterdam and Berlin) that will deny it a central place.

Given the low esteem in which contemporary documentary production is held in 'the West' (see S&S February 1992), the art of documentary film-making may seem an unexciting focus for a festival. Documentary is mistakenly seen as a lesser field of practice than fiction by those who confuse the term with reportage or current affairs. The late Joris Ivens, whose memory Bombay celebrated with a retrospective of over twenty films, summarised the aim of documentary film-making as "to dare to enter the no-man's-land that lies between reality and imagination, between documentary and fiction". And many of the documentaries shown embraced his notion to the letter, countering the closing ceremony lament from jury chairperson John Halas that documentary production has declined and should get back to Griersonian basics.

Festivals are usually more of an event for the people who attend from outside than for film-makers in the host country. The Bombay festival is visibly different in that it features the outstanding documentaries, shorts and animations produced in India over the last three years, and work from the state-funded Films Division, material made in-house or with independent film-makers such as Mani Kaul and Satyajit Ray. These retrospectives, and the marked Indian representation in the competition and information sections, show how important the festival is to film-makers from all over India as the only forum where their work can be seen and discussed by their peers. The seminars and open forums echo this emphasis on internal debates such as 'documentaries for change', 'the role of the critic in documentary', and the theatrical exhibition and distribution of documentary films.

As an attendee from Britain I felt a sense of *déjà vu* about some of the material. Some films were UK-funded and had already been, or were awaiting, broadcast, for example Manjira Datta's haunting and melancholic *Portraits from a Dreamshow*, or Anand Patwardhan's highly topical look at fundamentalism, *In the Name of God*.

One great virtue of a festival of documentary is that the films are projected, considerably enhancing their potential to move even the jaundiced types in the festival circuit audiences. This was borne out by several Indian films that were, for me, the festival's highlights. On a big screen, with a responsive audience, they illustrate the strength of documentary as a political and social force, and the communal interdependency of the film-makers and their subjects.

Winner for the best non-fiction over forty minutes was *Eyes of Stone* by Nilita Vachani



Awaiting broadcast: 'Portraits from a Dreamshow'

(collaborator with Mira Nair on *Salaam Bombay!*), a poetic examination of feminine ritual that worked as a powerful critique of patriarchy. Chalam Bennurakar's Tamil *Children of Mini Japan* (International Critics Award) is a moving but unsentimental critique of the plight of 250,000 child labourers in the match and fireworks industry of Sivakasi (the 'mini-japan' of the title), a story ironically interwoven with a traditional performance celebrating the childhood of Krishna. And though Anwar Jamal's *Call of the Bhagarathi* lacked the polish of many of the other films, it put over the strength of feeling of the villagers taking part, in particular in the impassioned questioning of the film-maker by one old woman who asks what is going to happen to the film, threatening that if he doesn't show it to the people in power to aid their cause, she will come after him.

The exchange was typical of the energy and strength of many of the women represented at the festival, both in front of and behind the camera.

All the films illustrated the 'talking group' style of collective interview which characterises the new wave of Indian social documentaries, in striking contrast to our own emphasis on the talking head. One irony of this festival was the sense that the international focus – over forty countries were represented, with the sad (perhaps symptomatic) exclusion of Black African film-making – was a tribute to documentaries in other parts of the world, presented here as examples to be followed by indigenous film-makers, whereas the status of documentary in India is in fact exemplary. When an exhibitor decried the fact that only one cinema in Delhi showed documentaries theatrically on a regular basis, I was hard pushed to think of any cinema that did the same in London or Paris.

Another more disturbing irony reflects on the involvement of the state. State-produced documentaries number in their hundreds, and many of these were featured, though the festival is also a focus for independent documentary production, allowing (in principle) dissident voices to be heard. That a pluralist ideal is not realised can be seen in the scandal attached to the award of the 'Family' prize, instituted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and worth twice as much financially as the prize for Best Film. This year the prize was not awarded, on the ostensible grounds that no film was felt by the jury to illustrate the spirit behind it. There was, in fact, an obvious candidate – Deepa Dhanraj's *Something*

Like a War, which examines India's national family planning programme from the perspective of women. This excellent work was obviously excluded because it expressly criticised the coercive policies initiated by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

But reservations aside, in the Bombay International Film Festival, the cause of documentary film-making has found its strongest advocate.

Cardiff

Theresa FitzGerald

Subversion, anarchy, black humour and plain bad taste were the guiding lights of this year's International Animation Festival, held in Cardiff under the banner, 'Rocking the Boat'. And even if some sessions – 'Great Experiments: Sex and Death', for instance – fell short of their titles, the festival as a whole lived up to most of its promises.

Not least of these was the presence of Chuck Jones, creator of that ultra-subversive, Bugs Bunny. At Cardiff to receive the first BBC David Platt Memorial Award for a Lifetime's Achievement in Animation, Jones delighted audiences with punchy anecdotes and intriguing glimpses into his own psyche: "I dream of being Bugs Bunny and always wake up as Daffy or Coyote".

Jan Svankmajer, revered Czech animator, was also in town for an award – the first Welsh Arts Council/Film Cymru International Film Fellowship. An accompanying retrospective, the premiere of his latest film, *Food*, and a magnificently mounted exhibition, 'Communication of Dreams', of his and Eva Svankmajerova's sculpture, ceramics and artwork, did much to illuminate the Svankmajers' bizarre imaginings.

With his compatriots Jiri Barta, Pavel Koutsky and Igor Sevcik, Svankmajer joined in a refreshingly forthright review of Czech animation since the 1989 revolution. Current changes, the film-makers suggested, were unlikely drastically to alter their work – indeed the lack of new film laws and the vagaries of the free market have made relatively little difference on a practical level. Still, they noted, Cardiff was the first occasion Czech animators had appeared as a delegation without an official minder.

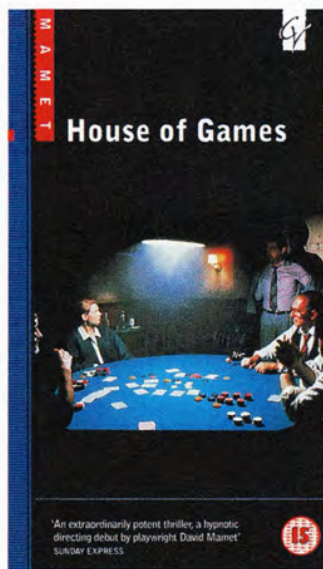
The films themselves took in major surveys of the Canadian and US scenes (from Betty Boop to the current avant-garde), the work of women animators, computer animation, films from South America and student work. Plus, of course, premieres (Bill Plympton's amiable feature, *The Tune*, Les Orton's flowing adaptation of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*), sneak previews (Dave Borthwick's disturbing *Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb*) and retrospectives: the Irish-Japanese-American Jimmy Murakami, Britain's David Anderson, Canadian Marv Newland, and Soyuzmultfilm animator, Nina Shorina.

If, of the current productions, no single work indisputably stood out, that's certainly no indication of mediocrity, but rather that overall standards are high, and improving all the time.

When an exhibitor decried the fact that only one cinema in Delhi showed documentaries theatrically on a regular basis, I was hard pushed to think of any cinema that did the same in London or Paris

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'An extraordinary, potent thriller, a hypnotic directing debut' Sunday Express

'A grimly funny microcosm of America... like a shadow strewn Hollywood thriller... remade by Robert Bresson'

Nigel Andrews, Financial Times



Things Change

1988, USA, colour, 100 minutes

'This is a classic buddy/odd couple movie given plenty of new twists... Mamet has become a strikingly good director'

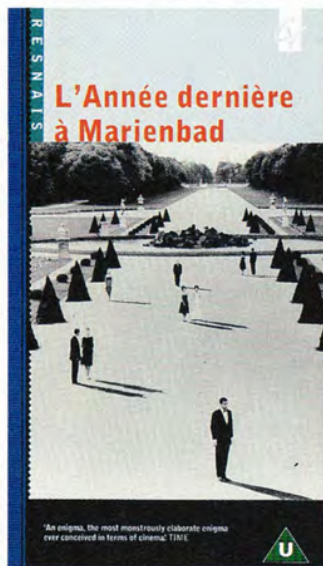
David Stratton, Variety

'A civilised contribution to the art of cheering us all up'

Tim Palleine, The Guardian

Playwright David Mamet turned to the big screen in the eighties, collaborating successfully as screenwriter with Bob Rafelson, Brian de Palma and Sydney Lumet. His first feature as director was the widely acclaimed *House of Games*, from his own screenplay and with his wife Lindsay Crouse in one of the lead roles. He followed this with the lighthearted thriller *Things Change*, in which Joe Mantegna and Don Ameche display a remarkable deftness of touch in their comic roles.

Connoisseur are releasing these at the mail order price of £12.99 each plus postage and packaging.



L'Année Dernière a Marienbad

1961, black and white, French with English subtitles, 100 minutes

'An enigma, the most monstrously elaborate enigma ever conceived in terms of cinema' Time Magazine



Hiroshima Mon Amour

1959, black and white, French with English subtitles, 91 minutes

'With *Hiroshima Mon Amour* Resnais emerges as one of the best movie-makers of our time' New Yorker

European cinema owes much to the work of French Director Alain Resnais, and Connoisseur are acknowledging his contribution by releasing two of his most outstanding films.

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'(The Intruder) is lean visceral, brutally stylish' Sheila Johnstone, The Independent



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Cinema and memory are at the heart of 'The Long Day Closes', the story of a year in the life of ten-year-old Bud, argues John Caughie, comparing it with 'Distant Voices, Still Lives'

● *The Long Day Closes* opens with a long still life: a vase of flowers, richly lit, stands out against a background fading into black. Full credits, in delicate regency script, scroll over the dark side of the screen to the accompaniment of a Boccherini minuet. This seems more like Greenaway territory than Terence Davies: has Davies been co-opted into the aristocracy? Is something really surprising going to happen? What are a model ship-maker and a cloud photographer doing on the credits for a Davies film? With the opening frames after the credits, however, we are back in the familiar landscape of Davies' working-class memory seen through the lens of aesthetics: the streets, the rain, the pub, the terraces, the stair leading up to a private realm where the camera seldom goes; and, again, the rain.

But the exquisitely still and enclosed still life of the credits fixes in my memory, its minuet accompaniment setting it apart from the distant, familiar voices of popular song and radio which haunt Davies' films. If the intention is to contrast the enclosed stasis of this first image with the open, airy spirituality of the clouds in the closing image (hence the cloud photographer), the effect for me is rather of a deliberate self-consciousness: a consciousness of this film's continuity from *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988), the still life of the image a literal recollection of the still lives of the previous film's title; and an ironic self-consciousness which plays on the audience's presumed expectations



Beyond the law of the father: Bud, the focus of 'The Long Day Closes', surrounded by sisters and friends, opposite; Terence Davies looks into the past, below

of a Davies' film. Implicit is a claim for Davies' radical difference from the quality tradition of English period nostalgia. Formal self-consciousness is probably the most recognisable characteristic of Davies' direction, producing the now familiar, formally perfect compositions. But in this new film there is a kind of self-absorption and knowing self-awareness which I find perversely narcissistic, admiring too much its own reflections, squeezing the life out of the subjects and replacing them with memory objects.

If we take *Distant Voices* and *Still Lives* as two separate films (their production, after all, separated by a period of two years), it is hard not to think of *The Long Day Closes* as the third part of the trilogy. This permits two lines of approach: it encourages the inescapable, but rather obvious, comparison with Bill Douglas' autobiographical trilogy, and it opens the question for the new and (surely) final part of the 'trilogy' of repetition, difference and value added.

I don't want to pursue the comparison with Bill Douglas very far here, except to make one observation. It is simply that the differences seem more important than the similarities, and we shouldn't allow the attractions of biographical and career comparisons to obscure the radically different objects of the two bodies of work. Douglas tried to reconstruct experience in images which simultaneously materialise particularities and generalise commonalities. His trilogy is rigorously autobiographical, at least to the extent that it is rooted in his own lived past. Davies, on the other hand, certainly in *Distant Voices*, is deliberately making autobiographical fiction, or at the very least is displacing autobiography on to his older brothers and sisters: born in 1945, he 'remembers' the Liverpool blitz.

Davies deconstructs family memories, his image and sounds part of a *musée imaginaire*, a memory heritage which is only the distant trace of particular experience. What makes the project interesting is the attempt to construct the past of individual experience through a museum of collective traces; what it risks is that everything – the streets, the rain, the ►

HALF WAY TO PARADISE

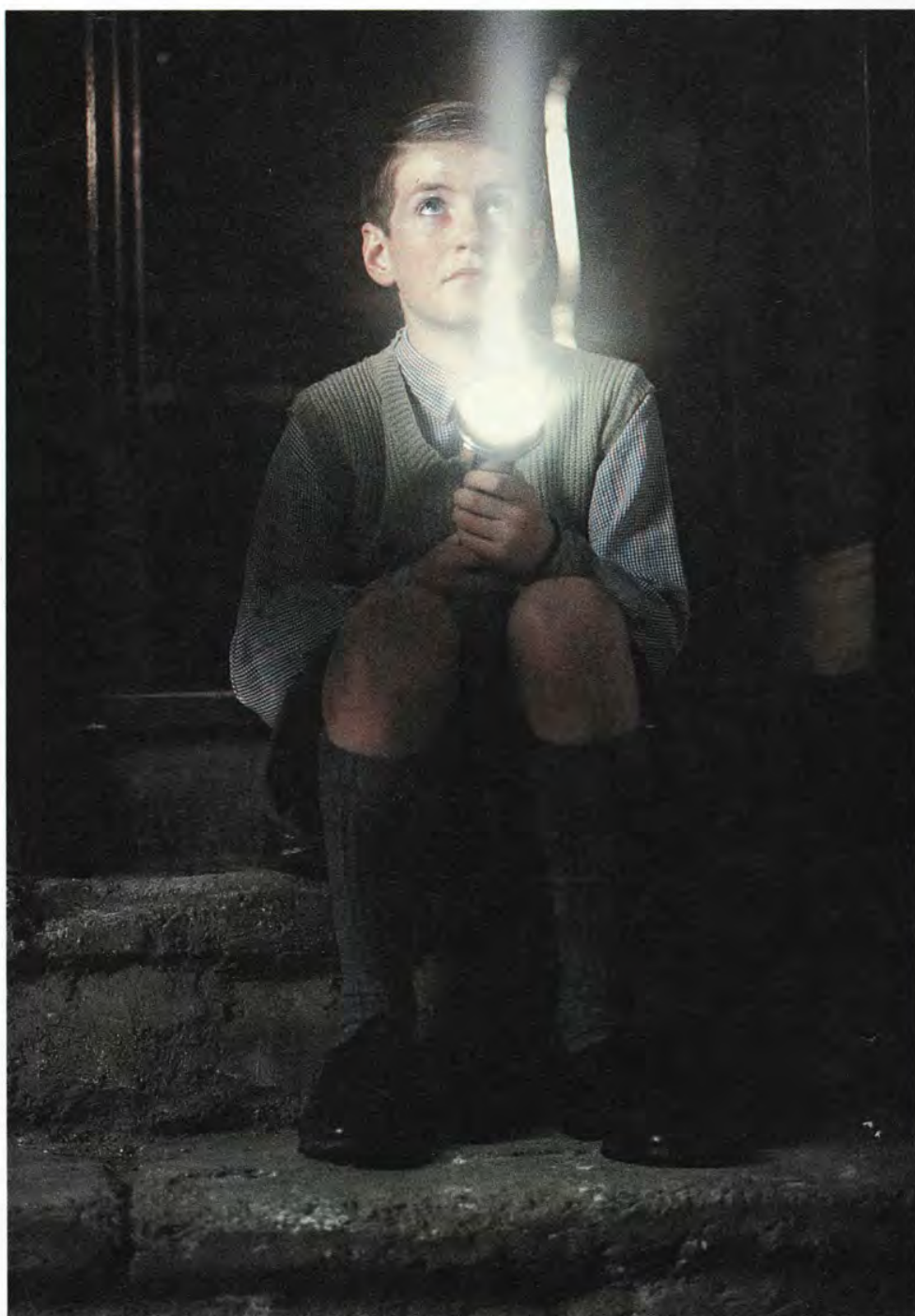
In the mood: Bud, his solitariness, and sometimes isolation, conveyed, as so often, by being framed in a doorway or behind railings – washed in light

◀ pubs, Kathleen Ferrier, the people – becomes an exhibit.

If *The Long Day Closes* is the continuation and resolution of *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, what does it add? Much remains the same. There is still the calling to memory of the voices and sounds which those of us in Davies' generation barely knew we remembered: BBC Home Service announcers, Kathleen Ferrier singing 'Blow the Wind Southerly', Dominic Behan singing 'She Moves Through the Fair'. There are still the compositions, and the long held shots, beautifully lit, of faces and places. And there is the familiar habitat of working-class nostalgia: a rain-drenched urban landscape transcended by community. In fact, so much remains the same that there is a feeling that any more of this will lead to self-parody. The shock of recognition which the distant voices produced in the first film is replaced by a game of anticipation, a kind of generation game in which we score points by spotting the references.

But there are changes. At the formal level, if I were to press the argument for the trilogy, I would want to re-name this third part 'Moving Pictures': distant voices, still lives, moving pictures – each term with its multiple reference. If *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* has as its dominant aesthetic the still, photographic image, reconstructing the family through the family album, *The Long Day Closes* uses a moving camera to construct the topography of place and relationship in an equally self-conscious and deliberate way. In the most strikingly virtuosic sequence in the film, an overhead camera, looking down vertically and impossibly, tracks continuously from the boy swinging on a bar in front of his house, over the heads of a cinema audience, reverses direction over a school classroom, continues over a church congregation, and ends up back where it started. Street, cinema, school, and church: the ceremonial detachment of the overhead tracking shot breaks up realistic space, traces the continuity of the institutions which define the culture, and places them in an imaginary configuration perceived from the removed objectivity of the artist. While *Distant Voices* remains for the most part interior to the family, *The Long Day Closes*, with a more socially mobile camera, places the family in the objective context of the social myths and institutions which inform the child's development. A gap appears between subjective nostalgia and detached, objective reconstruction.

Moving pictures also in the sense of the movies. The movies provide a constant reference point throughout the film. People talk about movies and go to movies. Movie dialogue punctuates the sound track: 'In those days, they had time for everything' from *The Magnificent Ambersons* introduces a Liverpool New Year street party; Judy Garland sings from *Meet Me in St Louis*; a scene from *The Ladykillers* is inserted for no other apparent reason than that a doorway in that film looks like the doorway in this film. None of it is simply gratuitous, since cinema – like school and church – are cen-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM HILTON

tral metaphors of the film, placing it in the fantasy of memory rather than in the reality of experience. This is figured in Davies' use of studio setting in preference to location, a studio setting which frequently evokes other settings from other films (in particular, from David Lean films – *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*). At another virtuosic point, a Christmas dinner becomes a studio fantasy, exterior street blending into interior, snow gently falling on the set, and the family gathered round with all the ironic excess of a Sirk movie. Whereas in *Distant Voices*,

Whereas in 'Distant Voices' memory was captured in popular song, here it is mediated through the fantasy of cinema

Still Lives memory was captured in popular song, in *The Long Day Closes* it is mediated through the fantasy of cinema.

The ironic distance of the movie references provides the defence against that final sense of moving pictures: the sentimental appeal to a nostalgia constructed out of immanent meanings and images always already invested with emotion. Davies has been accused of this, and defended for it, before: "it's a film about nostalgia, not an exercise in it", says Sean French of *Distant Voices*. The familiar postmodern alibi is brought into play: 'I wasn't there, your honour, I was elsewhere being ironic'. Clearly Davies plays off the aesthetic distancing of his formal enquiry into memory against the emotional immediacy of his remembering, to produce a more complex response than simple emotional identification or simple critical detachment. At at least one point in *Distant Voices*, as Carolyn Steedman has noted, the tension works to pow-

erful effect: the held shot of the young man weeping on the front steps of the house while a party goes on inside holds together distance and identification, allowing us to rage against his condition and share it at the same time.

But in *The Long Day Closes*, the playful irony of the movie in-jokes and the aestheticisation of drabness seem to me to cast the shadow of cynical and detached reason over the whole film. In this context, the long static shot of the mother at the wash tub singing 'If You Were the Only Girl in the World', beautifully composed, wonderfully lit, seems emotionally exploitative rather than emotionally intense, aestheticised out of the reality which the image might represent. However much the use of the studio sets, or the fragments of sound, might acknowledge ironically that this is the simulacra of history rather than the real thing, the tracing of the lineaments of class memory in the lineaments of the mother's face seems to construct yet again the eternal 'mam' whom no irony can reach.

In an interview with Derek Malcolm in 1988, Davies said, "If there had been no suffering there would have been no films". He also said his life was quite happy after his father died in 1955 (when Davies was ten). *The Long Day Closes* is set in 1955-56. There seems no historical reason for this. History, in the shape of Suez or Hungary or the break-up of the left, is almost totally absent; its only figuration – an effective but un-specific one – is the appearance at the door of a black immigrant who is promptly told to "frig off". As someone only a year older than Davies, for whom 1956 represented the first dim awareness of something more powerful than home and community, this absence is striking. Without wishing to make too much of biography, it seems that the significance of 1956 is that it was around that time that for Davies the rule of the father which dominated *Distant Voices* was replaced with the care of the mother. The removal of the father removes the inchoate anger of the earlier film, and without the anger, the characters, including the mother, seem deprived of emotional complexity, the possibility of change, or even of the desire that things be different. They become figures in a built set, object memories in a still life landscape. Hav-



Staging the past: Terence Davies re-creates the Liverpool of his 50s childhood for 'The Long Day Closes'

ing said this, something remains. It is possible that Davies is trying to do the most difficult thing: to construct a dramatically interesting image of a happy working-class childhood, free of oppressive and brutal patriarchy, safe in the support of a caring family. The final imagery of the clouds might figure such an elation. It would be quite a thing to do, and those of us who had such a childhood would be grateful. But it would have to be done within a recognition of a history of representations which works against it.

The tradition of British art cinema, in particular since the New Wave of the 60s, has left us a legacy of authorised images of the working class constructed – from the outside – as the Other of a middle-class culture in decline. In this mythology, the values of community, resilience, having a good time, virility (verging on brutality) and the enduring 'mam' map out the real, which holds its natural shape behind the simulations of an acquired culture, and legitimates the nostalgia of the left for a past it may never have had. Terence Davies has the virtue of having been there, on the inside, in the know. This gives him a complicated relation to the past, marked in the films by an aesthetic formalism which struggles to keep its distance from sentimental nostalgia even while it is celebrating sentimentality. The problem is how to remember the class, now from outside it, other than in the images which the myth provides, memorialising a loss which can only be registered in moving pictures and still lives. Despite the distance of its formal brilliance, *The Long Day Closes* seems to me still to linger lovingly on the old images of passivity and endurance which can only celebrate happiness by celebrating stasis, a fantasy of the past in which memory holds things in place.

In the end, I am not convinced that with this film Davies is absolutely different from the quality tradition of English period nostalgia. If comparisons are to be made, they might more profitably be made with David Lean, and, indeed, with the earlier Peter Greenaway, as much as with Bill Douglas, for whom formal rigour is a way of condensing pain rather than aestheticising it. Davies' formalism seems to risk becoming the house style of one English art cinema, while the reconstruction of a class at the point at which it is ceasing to exist is already enshrined as the paradigm of the Other. The mourning for the lost aristocracy seemed, in the English art cinema of the 80s, to have replaced its earlier romance with the working class. *The Long Day Closes* is not the *Brideshead* of the urban proletariat, but it shares its fascination with the appearance and the sound of the past, and its melancholy of loss. What distinguishes Davies' films from the heritage films is a critical awareness of the conditions of remembering, an ability to touch nerves of collective memory, and a recognition of the closeness of memory and fantasy. But for me, here, where that is played out in the absence of the inexpressible rage and disappointment which erupts in *Still Lives*, the film becomes simply an exquisite exercise.

'The Long Day Closes' opens in Britain on 22 May. It premiered at Cannes.

DESIGNING DESIRE

Pat Kirkham and Mike O'Shaughnessy talk to Terence Davies and the designers about the film's look

● Set in working-class Liverpool, Terence Davies' *The Long Day Closes* is unashamedly autobiographical. And one of the keys to understanding the impact of the film lies in the way the director and his collaborators have reproduced his visual and emotional memories. Design in film is often neglected, but in the case of *The Long Day Closes*, together with the music, it is design that is largely responsible for the film's affectivity, making a significant contribution to its overall meaning and appeal. Mick Coulter (director of photography), Monica How (costume designer) and Christopher Hobbs (production designer) were chosen by Davies not so much for their track records (which are considerable), but because he felt that they would understand and empathise with the memories and emotions he was trying to convey. Coulter, slightly younger than the others, is a Glaswegian from a Catholic background, for whom Davies' early life was "not entirely foreign territory"; Hobbs and How too drew extensively on childhood memories of the same period.

Hobbs realised at once that the film "wasn't a re-creation of 50s Liverpool, it was a re-creation of Terence's memory. I therefore went for a memory realism, which is not the same as a real realism, and tried to create a child's-eye vision of the world". Hobbs decided to show Davies' childhood world as crisp and new, full of different textures, and slightly larger than life. "If you go back to a place twenty or thirty years later it looks flat, dull and a little small. So I've tried to create an air of hyperrealism". He exaggerated the proportions of the street, brought out the textures, and deepened the shadows. The railings curve and twist so much they seem alive, drainpipes were melted to give them a sense of movement and the moulds of the cobbles and kerbstones inflated. To create intense emotional mood changes, Hobbs made Bud's primary school a place of cosiness and warmth by filling the nuns' study with a multitude of objects, while the 'big' school to which he moves, where he is unhappy, beaten and humiliated, is cold, sparse and empty. Ironically, Hobbs was first drawn to Davies' work because he admired the starkness of his first film, "but when I spoke to Terence about this, he told me 'I really wanted to fill it with props but we couldn't afford it'". Hobbs, who worked on Jarman's *Edward II*, has a much less archaeological approach to set design than Davies and they had a "friendly pull back and forth. He liked to put props in and I liked to take them out".

Davies wanted the costumes to look "like the ordinary clothes that people lived in". Monica How achieved this ►

by buying clothes of the period rather than having them made up. Her strategy also worked out more cheaply; on a budget of £20,000, she produced clothes that would have cost over £70,000 to hire or make. She bought sufficient outfits for the actors to be able to choose what they felt most comfortable in, and like the early silent films, in which actors wore their own clothes, there is a sense here too that these are 'real' people in ordinary clothes. Davies cast mainly for faces and insisted his actors did not act or learn scripts in the traditional English style, which can be stagey, preferring them just to be and 'be natural' in front of camera. Both costume and acting contribute to the 'realistic naturalness' of the film.

Davies frames each shot with the care of a still photographer or a painter seeking out *tableaux vivants*. Before shooting began, he showed Coulter books of 'old master' paintings, including Vermeers and Rembrandts, where intense central light falls away quickly into shadow, together with 50s Kodachrome photographs of Lancashire – both of which he claimed captured the moods and feelings he wanted to convey. The overall look of the film was achieved after exhaustive tests using different film stocks, lenses and filters and the bleach by-pass process, in which colour is desaturated in the final wash of the printing. Davies had used this technique in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, but here it was improved upon to give a warmer and more glossy finish as well as the desired contrasts of light and shade. The monochromatic, 'period' look of the 50s snapshots is suggested by the limited range of tones used in the sets and costumes, in combination with coral filters, Eastman-color and "old Cooke lenses which are less sharp than modern ones and slightly round everything off".

Davies uses the warmth achieved by these effects to show Bud as happy; his isolation and sense of being trapped is conveyed through the falling away of light, or by framing him behind shadows, windows, staircases and railings. The use of designed objects in this way was apparently not a conscious one for Davies, but is acknowledged by him in retrospect: "I didn't see the railings as imprisonment. They were part of the house and comforting in an odd sort of way, but I think subconsciously I must have thought they were a kind of prison, because they do look like that".

Davies often shows Bud as a spectator looking out on the world. This is in line with one of the film's central concerns: the director's love of cinema. The visual style at times re-creates 50s Hollywood, as though Davies' child's view saw the world in terms of a film industry that gave a gloss and richness to daily life and things archetypically English: "It's Hollywood rain you see. I can remember seeing the rain and thinking 'Oh, it's just like a Hollywood musical'. I try to celebrate Englishness with the panache of the Americans".

But despite its Hollywood touches, the film is firmly situated within every-

day reality, with much of its evocative power coming from the commonplace 50s artefacts and social customs within it. Davies is "interested in the poetry of the ordinary, ordinary things happening to ordinary people", and celebrates this. His family were poor: "There were ten of us; we could only afford to have the parlour and downstairs part of the hall painted and papered, so everything else was distempered". But at the same time there was a richness, "the culture was incredibly rich with very little; you had the radio, the cinema, the pub and the dance hall, *finito* – but that seemed incredibly rich". Hobbs recognises the almost inevitable nostalgia in all this, but claims it is "not a sentimental nostalgia. Terence has too cynical an eye for that, thank God". Hobbs does not believe in being 'perfect period' for everything: "It's as sterile as it's impossible. It's far better to find a salient object which says 'this is the 50s' than to put in things from the Festival of Britain to hammer it home". The interior shots of the house do not try to show its rooms down to the last detail; instead long held shots of fragments of rooms or objects, for example the two-minute shot of the parlour carpet, convey what it felt like to inhabit that space. "It's like having everything in a room plain and then you have one wonderful splash of colour, a bit of carpet or curtain. It makes you think that the whole room is rich when in fact it's not".

Sound and camera movement give fluidity, depth and richness to the film. The way the camera tracks and dissolves, together with the symmetrical framings, gives a sense of artifice, celebrating a stylised cinematic view of the world. There is a freedom of movement from one space to another which allusively links different aspects of Bud's life, particularly home, cinema, church and school. The soundtrack combines numerous musical pieces, film quotations and everyday sounds; the film sound clips produce an ironic commentary on the images and the music gives the film an almost symphonic form. Davies has the courage to hold key images so that we listen fully to the music, mainly popular songs, used in conjunction with classical music, which he sees now as complementing the feelings he had then. So important is the combination of visuals and music that for some major shots the music was played as the camera crew was filming.

Davies wanted to re-create both emotional and visual memories, and in *The Long Day Closes* the emotions are reached through the visuals, in particular costume, design and the overall 'look' of the film. Though he denies that making the film was a therapeutic process – "It's never catharsis because it's too painful" – the effects on our eyes, ears and heart are powerful. By the end of the film we may recall, mourn, celebrate and reflect upon our own as well as Bud's early years; an experience that invokes an acute sense of loss that touches the heart. Few directors dare to do that today.



Cinema

Terence Davies: "When I was a child there were eight cinemas within walking distance. I started to love it so much, it created an entire world I wanted to be in. I was going every night, and sometimes a British film was good enough to be the big picture, I can't tell you how wonderful that was. I loved comedy – Alastair Sim and Margaret Rutherford – and they were loved, they had a big working-class following because they had a kind of intrinsic comedy".

Mick Coulter: "Terence is a real movie buff. When we were shooting in the cinema I asked him about the movie he was referring to, was it black and white or colour? If colour, I might have put a touch more colour in, but I never yet found out

the answer. What I got was a fascinating, detailed description of the movie, complete with whole chunks of dialogue. Brilliant!"

Terence Davies: "A lot of the presence of the cinema is emotional, it's the music, it's on the soundtrack. The camera doesn't need to linger on the interior and the fact that you've only seen very little makes it seem richer. It really is a question of less is more, a juxtaposition of what you're hearing and what you're seeing. For example when 'Kind Hearts and Coronets' is playing, they're in a church. There are subtle connections".



The street

Christopher Hobbs: "There were photographs of nearly every Liverpool street except Terence's and he had no family photographs. So we built on his memory; that was our starting point. The street had been demolished and we had to reconstruct it. It was like a psychiatrist or psychologist probing into memory. "To get 'memory realism', to get the child's view of the street, I did many subtle things. The railings were more twisted and curling than they would have been and all the drainpipes were melted slightly so that we could put in a little movement. Even the shop signs were not quite level. The eye is hardly aware of it, but it all comes out just that little bit more crisply on film."

"I went for lots of texture, that is so

important for the camera. It gives a solid feel to the sets and is especially important with this low-key colour. (Just think of David Lean's 'Oliver Twist' if you want a good example of good texture.)

"It's expensive to build a whole street, complete with cobblestones. We got it cheaper by doing it at Sands Films. They know their architectural details and construction so well that we saved a huge amount because I didn't have to draw out every single moulding and detail. I could just say 'An 1840 window frame', and it would be done perfectly. So we saved time and energy as well as money".



Bud in window

Mick Coulter: "Terry has some strong ideas about framing, he loves everything symmetrical; he very rarely moves the camera, and if you move the camera it won't be a move to accommodate people, people have to fit within his frames, so in that sense it goes back to being painterly, like tableaux vivants. Terry always shot full square on".

Terence Davies: "This is the last of the autobiographical films I shall do; perhaps I've changed. When I was that young, those four years ago, everything seemed fixed and it was such a feeling of security that this is how it will be forever, and I really believed that; I didn't think I'd get any older, nobody would get any older and everything would stay like this forever."

But it didn't, of course it's not going to.

"I tried to hold the security of those years, but the end of the film says it doesn't stay like that, you've got to come to terms with it. My feelings are mixed. If I could change everything and could go back to it I would, but that's real cowardice because you've got to face life, it's no good saying it was wonderful in 1956, because it's not 1956. I don't like change, I will always resist it, yet I promote it as well, that's the irony".



Christ

Mick Coulter: "What is behind the camera here is of the utmost importance. This is where art becomes industry. Terence wanted a shot that started off with the hands of Christ and ended up with St John on the cross suspended above the Sea of Galilee by Dali. First of all, it would have been difficult to suspend someone like that. Christopher Hobbs had a clever idea to get the effect by blacking out everything else (that was limbo) and having the person horizontal and blocked up so that his body was away from the cross. Chris did tests with a video camera and then we tracked the camera up and rolled round so we ended up upside down to the cross. That shot was flipped up so the head was at the top of the frame. A light on a dolly

tracked across with us as we wanted to give the impression he was moving. The finishing touch was a bit of serendipity. As the camera and equipment moved, the floor creaked under the weight". **Christopher Hobbs:** "Terence always knows what he wants but not always how to get it. We ended up with some bizarre and remarkable camera set-ups, cranes on top of cranes, the works. A lot of trick shots which I enjoy immensely".



Dresses

Monica How: "It was important to Terence that the dress be right, and important to me too. With the emphasis on framed tableaux there is a great deal of attention on the dress and sets."

"Terry would explain what he wanted, which would be modified by what I could get. It's fortunate that one can still buy 50s clothes today. Dresses are fairly easy, there are plenty around. And I got suits and hats. Coats were not so easy, but I scoured the country and got them. The exception was shoes; the answer was always, 'Sorry no shoes'. Out of the range of dresses I had bought, the actors selected those with which they felt most comfortable. Terence never works with primadonnas, and so the actors wanted

to look right for the part rather than glamorous or stylish on screen. They know what they can wear comfortably and well."

"Terence's great strength (and it is one many English directors have) is that once he trusts you, he lets you get on with your job as a professional. It was the scenes with his mother and the young girls wearing summer frocks or best dresses that we discussed in most detail. He wanted those to be as exact as possible". **Terence Davies:** "They had to look as though the clothes they wore were ordinary clothes that they lived in, except for the special dresses that they wore once a week".



Rain

Terence Davies: "Lots of people think this shot is too long, far too slow and self-indulgent, but those who like it go with it. When he goes off screen after waiting outside the cinema, the rain goes off and the lights go on and you just see that rain drift; you can't direct that because when you switch it off there's still a little bit of wind and it made it go like that – that's serendipity."

"'Singin' in the Rain', I'm sure that's where the rain came from. It was so wonderfully colourful. During the big sequence I just cried and cried because I thought this was such happiness, I'll never know such happiness again – it breaks my heart."

"It's Hollywood rain you see, because

English rain seemed so feeble. It was like the wonderful films of the 40s where it's always Christmas, so it had to look like dramatic rain. I can remember being so conscious of the seasons; when you're a child you move from one emotional state to another, not in a logical way, but in an emotional way".

**RAPE AND REVENGE
IN 'I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE'
AND 'THE ACCUSED'**
BY CAROL CLOVER

GETTING EVEN

● Rape, real or threatened, has been a staple of cinema more or less from the beginning. Until the early 70s, however, it was typically a side theme – a psychopathic flourish in a suspense plot, or one of several atrocities Indians might visit on whites in the Western, and so on. One 1972 film changed that: *Last House on the Left* (Wes Craven). It moved rape from the periphery to the centre – turned what had been a side-show in any kind of movie to the main act, the central motivation, of that American favourite, the revenge plot.

The marriage of rape to revenge was made in movie heaven, to judge from the spate of films that followed. Ironically enough, it was a marriage for which the matchmaker was the women's movement, for in terms more or less explicitly feminist, rape became not only a deed deserving of brutal retribution, but a deed that women themselves (not cops, boy-friends, or fathers) undertook to redress. From low-budget, 'exploitation' products like *I Spit on Your Grave* (Meir Zarchi, 1977, aka *Day of the Woman*), *Ms. 45* (Abel Ferrara, 1980, UK title: *Angel of Vengeance*), *The Ladies' Club* (A. K. Allen, 1986) and *Positive I.D.* (Andy Anderson, 1986) to glossy, mainstream examples like *Lipstick* (Lamont Johnson, 1976) and *Extremities* (Robert M. Young, 1986), women take knives and guns to their rapists, or their friends' or sisters' rapists, or just any man, on the grounds that all men are party to 'rape culture' and hence corporately liable and fair game.

Feminism has given many things to popular culture, some more savory than others. One of its main donations to horror cinema is the image of an angry woman – a woman so angry that she can be imagined as a credible perpetrator (emphasis on *credible*) of the kind of violence on which, in the low-mythic universe, the status of full protagonist rests. Like slasher movies, rape-revenge movies pose problems for

feminist critics; there is no doubt, however, that both genres were enabled by the women's movement and could only have emerged in its context. The rape-revenge film, at least in its grittier versions, is nothing more or less than the 'castrate rapists' slogan made flesh.

It's not just the sexual politics of the rape-revenge film that invite attention. It's also its cultural politics – the relation of the 'exploitation' versions to the mainstream ones – and its history. The issues raised by the genre emerge most clearly in a comparison between the 'worst' and 'best': the infamous *I Spit on Your Grave* and the Oscar-winning *The Accused*.

The plot of *I Spit on Your Grave* could hardly be simpler. A New York novelist named Jennifer who rents a summer house in Connecticut is first harassed by some young men in the neighbourhood and eventually raped by them in turn. The act begins in the meadow to which they have dragged her from the canoe in which she was sunning herself. After stripping her, the men first offer her to their virginal and retarded companion, Matthew, but when he runs away in fear, Johnny (the ringleader) falls on her and brutally rapes her. She rises and staggers from the meadow into a forest, only to be again captured and again raped, this time anally, by Andy (after again being offered first to Matthew). From the forest she staggers and crawls by turns back to her house, but they have preceded her there.

This time, with the rest of them shouting him on, Matthew almost manages to penetrate her inert body, but his victory is short-lived and he gives way to Stanley, who orders her to felate him just before she falls into unconsciousness. They leave, but not until they have given Matthew a knife and instructed him to kill her. He goes in but is no more able to stab her than he was to rape her, so he wipes some blood on

the knife to satisfy the others and they leave her for dead. So the first forty minutes.

After a short transition (representing the passage of two weeks), during which Jennifer patches together herself and her manuscript (which they tore to shreds as they left), the revenge half of the film begins. Jennifer invites Matthew over and after some preliminaries, hangs him and rolls his body into the river. Johnny she invites for a ride, and only too ready to believe that she "really liked it", he goes along. At a secluded spot she pulls a pistol on him and tells him to drop his pants; he talks fast and she seems to change her mind, tossing the gun aside and inviting him to her house for a hot bath. Cut to the bathroom, where the two of them are in the tub and she is fondling him with one hand and reaching for a knife with the other. "God bless your hands", he murmurs, "that's so sweet – that's so sweet it's painful" – at which point he bellows and rises, covered with bubbles and blood gushing from his now genital-less crotch. Jennifer locks him in and coolly listens to opera downstairs as he bleeds to death. That body too goes into the river. There remain Andy and Stanley. They come to her place by boat with the intention of killing her, but after a struggle she pushes them into the river and takes over the boat. She puts an axe into one of them and dismembers the other with the propeller. With that the film ends, aftermathless.

The American reaction to *I Spit on Your Grave* was if anything more vitriolic than the British one. There is no doubt that the film is an extreme case, that it poses problems for the feminist critic, and that it is exceptionally hard to watch. The question is, why? Although there are a couple of men-only sequences, the film is framed from beginning to end as Jennifer's story. Most of the action is registered from her vantage point, and there is no doubt whatsoever that its sympathies lie with her. The film gives equal time, and in some sense equal terms, to the rapes and the revenge. The claim on the part of some reviewers that *I Spit on Your Grave* shows the woman enjoying the rape is flatly dishonest; not for a moment does she express anything but protest, fear and pain. The rapes are presented as almost sexless acts of cruelty that the men commit more for each other's edification than for physical pleasure. Nor is there any pleasure to speak of in the revenge half; Jennifer goes about the business of catching and murdering her assailants almost impassively. It is, in fact, an oddly external film.

One of the most disturbing things about *I Spit on Your Grave* may be its perverse simplicity. The men are not odd specimens, but in the normal range of variation; their brutality is not traced to dysfunctional upbringing (no Mother Bateses here). Jennifer takes the revenge she does, not for deep-seated psychological reasons,

but because it is the punishment that fits the crime: there are no extenuating circumstances; the law is not involved, nor are legal questions raised; there is no concern whatsoever, not even at the level of lip service, with moral and ethical issues. If higher forms of the rape-revenge story involve us in a variety of ethical, psychological, legal and social matters, *I Spit on Your Grave* closes all such windows and leaves us staring at the *lex talionis*, or law of retribution, for what it is. The film shocks, finally, not because it is alien, but because it is too familiar, because we recognise that the emotions it engages are regularly engaged by the big screen but almost never bluntly acknowledged for what they are.

That is not to say that *I Spit on Your Grave* is entirely explanation-free. On the contrary, it has a thesis of sorts, a proposition about the group dynamic that drives men to deeds of which they might not be capable alone. It takes as its point of departure the retarded Matthew, whose status as a virgin seems to compromise the masculinity of the group. It is ostensibly to change that status, to bring Matthew into the family of man, that they capture Jennifer in the first place. The more he fails (three times he recoils and even runs away), the more they goad ("Here she is, Matthew. You want to be a man, don't you? Don't miss your chance, Matthew, you're going to die a virgin...") And the more they goad, the more they slip into the language of what we are to understand are the underlying issues of impotence, homosexuality and effeminacy.

To regard Matthew as a non-participant, as do the remarkable number of descriptions that speak of three rapists rather than four, misses an important point. For one thing, it is against his failed performance that the others can define their own as successful. They are what Matthew is *not*; Matthew is what they are better *than*. Once set in motion, the proposition that masculinity is little or nothing more than a function of comparison leads to another series of questions: how *much* better is Stanley than Matthew? Andy than Stanley? Johnny than Andy than Stanley? Matthew is not only the one they compare themselves to; he is the one they compare themselves *through*. If the fiction is that the assault on Jennifer is an act of generosity towards one of their members, the fact is that it is a sporting competition, the point of which is to test and confirm an existing hierarchy: Johnny the winner, Andy a strong second, Stanley the loser, Matthew on the bench. To all but Matthew, the woman is simply the playing field – and even Matthew is finally goaded into at least trying to join the game. The goading itself, particularly during the sequence in the house (when Matthew manages to effect penetration), echoes the crowd cheers of a football game: "Hey Matthew! Come on, Tiger!" and then, in unison, faster and faster, "Go! Go! Go!

Go!". Matthew, for his part, strips and imitates a victory trumpet as he falls on Jennifer. "All right! Come on, killer!", the others shout. For *I Spit on Your Grave*, at least, gang rape has very much to do with male sport and pecking order and very little to do with sex, the idea being that team sport and gang rape are displaced versions of one another, male sorting devices both, and both driven by male spectatorship and the sheerest forms of misogyny.

Ironically, the men's individual protestations, when they find themselves at Jennifer's mercy, almost perversely acknowledge the force of the group dynamic. Stanley facing the boat propeller: "I'm sorry, I really am. It was Johnny who talked me into it. It was Johnny made me do it. I didn't want to do it". Or Johnny at gunpoint: "Look, you've got the wrong man. Stanley, the guy with dark hair, the guy's a sex maniac". Or Matthew: "I hate you. I've had nothing but bad luck with you. I have no friends now because of you... I'm sorry for what I did to you with them, but it wasn't my idea. I have no friends".

In a sense, each of the men is right to feel that he is not individually responsible, for the film keeps insisting that the dynamic of male groups is larger than the sum of its parts. But that does not mean, in this primitive universe of the *lex talionis*, that the individuals are therefore not responsible for the actions of the group. On the contrary, as under the blood-feud, they are corporately liable; any of them – in this case all – are proper targets for retribution, regardless of their own degree of participation. For many viewers, the murder of Matthew is the film's most disturbing moment, for he is so clearly drawn as the others' victim. But *I Spit on Your Grave* gives no points for reluctance or action under pressure. That Matthew never quite made it off the bench is irrelevant: what matters is that he *would* have played if he could. Reviews may speak of "three rapes" and "three rapists", but, as the final body count of four shows, Jennifer knows better.

With *The Accused* (Jonathan Kaplan, 1988), the rape-revenge drama hits Oscar level. It is perhaps no coincidence that the most highly produced version of the story to date should also be the one not only most focused on third-party intervention, but also the one in which the third party succeeds in meting out justice, thereby proving the judicial system woman-friendly after all. This plot too is a simple one: a working-class woman named Sarah (Jodie Foster) – a little drunk, a little stoned, and very flirtatious – is gang-raped in a bar; she brings suit and is furious when her lawyer (the Assistant District Attorney, a woman) plea-bargains the case; she insists on another round, and that one she wins. It is, of course, true that the story is constrained by the facts of the real life case

on which it is based, but it is also true that there have been a number of cases in the last decade, some of them just as highly publicised, in which the outcome is less happy: cases in which men plead 'rough sex' and are acquitted, cases in which men are convicted and sentenced but come back to kill the woman who turned them in, and so on. But for reasons at which we can only guess, it is *The Accused's* happy-ending, 'feel-good' version of the rape-revenge story that made it through the Hollywood gauntlet and that proved one of the biggest box office movies of the year.

The Accused has its considerable virtues, one of which is the broadside way it engages the issue of consent and another the way it highlights the legal difficulties of prosecution. And like other films of the tradition, it is informed by an analysis of sorts. Rape, in *The Accused*, is male sport. The college boys who turn up at the bar that night and end up party to the rape have just come from 'the game'; the television set blares out sports events; for her job waitressing at The Dugout, Sarah dresses as a baseball playerette; a framed newspaper on the wall in the DA's office bears the headline "Plowing Match"; the rape takes place on a pinball machine featuring the game Slam Dunk; during the rape itself, the male spectators cheer and clap and chant in unison, "One, two, three, four – poke that pussy till it's sore"; the rapists in turn undertake their task as if it were the World Series (one spits on his hands as he steps into the batter's box). The rape-sport analogy is hardly new – *I Spit on Your Grave* made the same point a decade earlier, right down to the recognition that they also serve who cheer from the sidelines – but with *The Accused* it enters the mainstream and the status of those who cheer from the sidelines is established as criminal.

But if something is gained in this most civilised version of the rape-revenge story, something is also lost. There is a sense in which the third party, the legal system, becomes the hero of the piece: focus has in any case shifted from the victim to her lawyer; from questions of why men rape and how victims feel to questions of what constitutes evidence; from bedroom (or wherever) as the site of confrontation to courthouse. (Compare the final shot of *I Spit on Your Grave*, which shows us a smiling Jennifer speeding along in a motorboat, to *The Accused's* helicopter shot of the courthouse.) Sarah is vehement enough in her wish for revenge ("I want those motherfuckers put away forever!"), and when the law fails her on the first round she even engages in an act of vigilante justice (ramming her car into the pickup of one of the men who cheered her rapists on). But for the most part, the retaliatory urge is displaced on to the woman Assistant DA who tries the case. And in our increasing engagement with her uphill struggle (to plea-bargain effectively in the first trial, to hit upon the right charge ►

WITH SOME ADDITIONAL NICETIES, TODAY'S MEAT MOVIE IS TOMORROW'S BLOCKBUSTER

◀ for the second, to gain the support of her cynical colleagues, to triumph over the warning that she'll ruin her career, to talk a reluctant witness into testifying, and so on), we lose sight of what the lower forms of the rape drama unfailingly keep at centre stage: the raped woman herself. Nor does the fact that justice is served not through the straightforward prosecution of rape but through the unorthodox deployment of a statute concerning criminal solicitation – presented, in the film, as a stroke of luck – do much to dispel suspicion about the law's efficacy in such cases.

No less undermining is the fact that the film ends where many women's fears begin, at the moment the jury delivers the 'guilty' verdict. Over and over, rape-revenge movies make the point that even when the law succeeds in the short run, it may fail in the long term. *Ladies Club* is a wall-to-wall indictment of the system that either fails to convict rapists or convicts and sentences them only to release them so they can rape (and/or murder) again: "Where rape is concerned, the law stinks". From the perspective of the rape-revenge tradition, and indeed from the perspective of those involved in real life male-on-female violence, *The Accused*, in its implication that the story is over when the men are sentenced, is pure Pollyannaism.

Finally, there is the fact that although *The Accused* seems to bring male gazing to account (by bringing to bear on the cheering onlookers a charge of criminal solicitation), the authority for the conviction, and indeed for the status of the incident as a whole, rests solely with a male spectator: Ken, the college boy who witnesses the event, calls the police, and finally, after some equivocating, provides the testimony that convicts his fellows. The importance of Ken's vision is established in the first shots, and it is remarkable how often and at what length the film has us look at his eyes looking at something – or nothing, as in the case of two intercut shots of him staring pensively out of his fraternity house window, shots whose only purpose can be to remind us that amid all the conflicting accounts there is a truth and *this* is where it resides. Likewise, the rendition of the rape itself, during which the camera seems as interested in watching Ken's face watching Sarah being raped as it is in watching the rape itself. But the real giveaway is the fact that the rape can only be shown directly – the flashback can only happen – when Ken takes the stand and narrates his eye-witness account. Sarah testifies to precisely the same events shortly before, but whereas her testimony remains her own version, Ken's testimony becomes our version, *the* version. After a few sentences, his voiceover ceases and the rape unfolds before us as visible, omniscient history takes over.

Seldom has a set of male eyes been more privileged; without their witness, there would be no case – there would, for legal purposes, as

the DA notes, be no rape. Those male eyes point up a fundamental difference between *The Accused* and the lower forms of the rape-revenge story, in which there is a rape because a woman knows she has been raped. The features of *The Accused* that make it such a welcome contribution to the ongoing consciousness-raising about the workings of rape law are the very features that make one understand why the self-help versions of the story not only exist, but flourish. As the public reaction to the Bernard Goetz subway incident makes clear, even respectable citizens can sink to the vigilante mentality when they feel inadequately acknowledged by the justice system. *The Accused* shows the system working, all right – but only barely (only by loophole, actually), and only slowly, and only because a man of good will and a very smart, sympathetic and stubborn female lawyer happen to be in the right place at the right time.

Although *The Accused* may at first glance seem a world apart from *I Spit on Your Grave*, the two films are, in fact, pretty and ugly versions of the same story, right down to the sports metaphor. And *The Accused* owes its very existence – its conception, its terms, and much of its success – to a low-life ancestry that has been neatly erased in its migration from the category of horror to the category of courtroom drama. But take away *The Accused*'s elaborate displacement machinery – its legal, psychological, ethical and social ruminations – and relocate it beyond the arm of the law ("out there where no one can hear you scream") and you have *I Spit on Your Grave*: the story of a gang-raped woman hell-bent on revenge.

One can't quarrel with civilisation, but it's sometimes useful to look past its comforts to see the stories we tell ourselves, as a culture, for what they really are. I suggested earlier that what disturbs about *I Spit on Your Grave* is its perverse simplicity, the way it closes all the intellectual exits and leaves us staring at the *lex talionis* unadorned. Let me now be more explicit: what disturbs most about *I Spit on Your Grave* is the way it exposes the inner workings of *The Accused* and films like it – the way it reminds us that lots and lots of the movies and television dramas that we prefer to think of in higher terms are in fact similarly funded by impulses we would rather deny. *I Spit on Your Grave*, in short, is the repressed of *The Accused*, and it is probably for this reason as much as any other that it has met with the punitive response it has.

The case could be made that horror movies in general are the repressed of a fair share of American mainstream cinema. Scratch the glossy surface of *The Silence of the Lambs* and you have a slasher film, complete with girl hero and effeminate psychokiller ("a *Nightmare on Elm*

Street for grad students", one reviewer called it). Scratch *Pacific Heights* and you are in an economy of bloodsucking that looks like nothing so much as a vampire film. Scratch any number of recent films – *Thelma & Louise* for one – and you are looking, once again, at rape, revenge, and the notion of corporate liability that makes every man pay. The similarities are not coincidental. Even a cursory glance at the chronology makes it clear that the direction of trickle here is up, not down. As any horror fan knows, much of what reviewers tout as mainstream innovation is not new at all, but has flourished for years, even decades, in the world of movies that lies beyond the world of reviews. No aficionado can see *The Silence of the Lambs* or *Mortal Thoughts* without thinking of all the low-budget, often harsh and awkward but sometimes deeply energetic films that preceded them by a decade or more – films that said it all, and in flatter terms, and on a shoestring.

One of many ironies in American film-making is that an entry level position in the industry, and one of the few opportunities for something like genuine auteurship, has been provided by the low-budget horror and cult genres. 'Written and directed by' (not to speak of 'written, directed, and produced by') is a label more frequently encountered in the trashy underbush of American film-making than in the studio parks, and the story of the nickel-and-dime horror movie that catapults its maker into the Hollywood big-time is something of a legend. Certainly the generation of film-makers that energised the low or border tradition in the 70s and 80s – conspicuously John Carpenter, George Romero, Wes Craven, Tobe Hooper, Larry Cohen, David Lynch, David Cronenberg, and Jonathan Demme – have moved on to slicker things and often slicker studios as well. With them they have taken the themes and techniques of horror, as well as the lessons they have learned about young audiences (for horror audiences are young, and so prognosticate future trends). As with people, so with ideas; what critics avoid, scriptwriters follow and cannibalise, again on the presumption that, with the addition of some niceties (some fleshing out of character, motivation, and political philosophy), today's 'meat movie' is tomorrow's blockbuster.

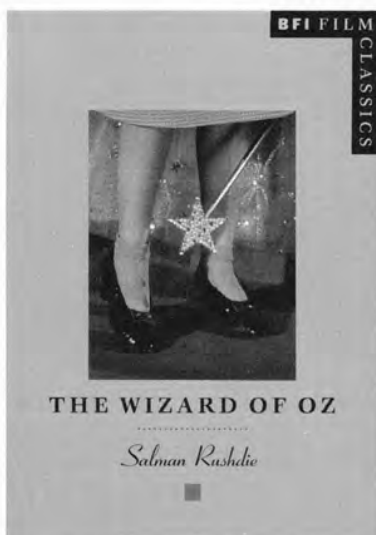
The most spectacular donation of yesterday's meat movie to today's blockbuster is the female victim-hero. In upscaling the tough-girl hero of the slasher movie, the Hollywood studios have made an honest woman of her, but they did not invent her from whole cloth. Nor did they invent the plot that devolves on a raped woman's angry pursuit of justice. That honour too belongs to the branch of film-making we call, ironically enough, exploitation.

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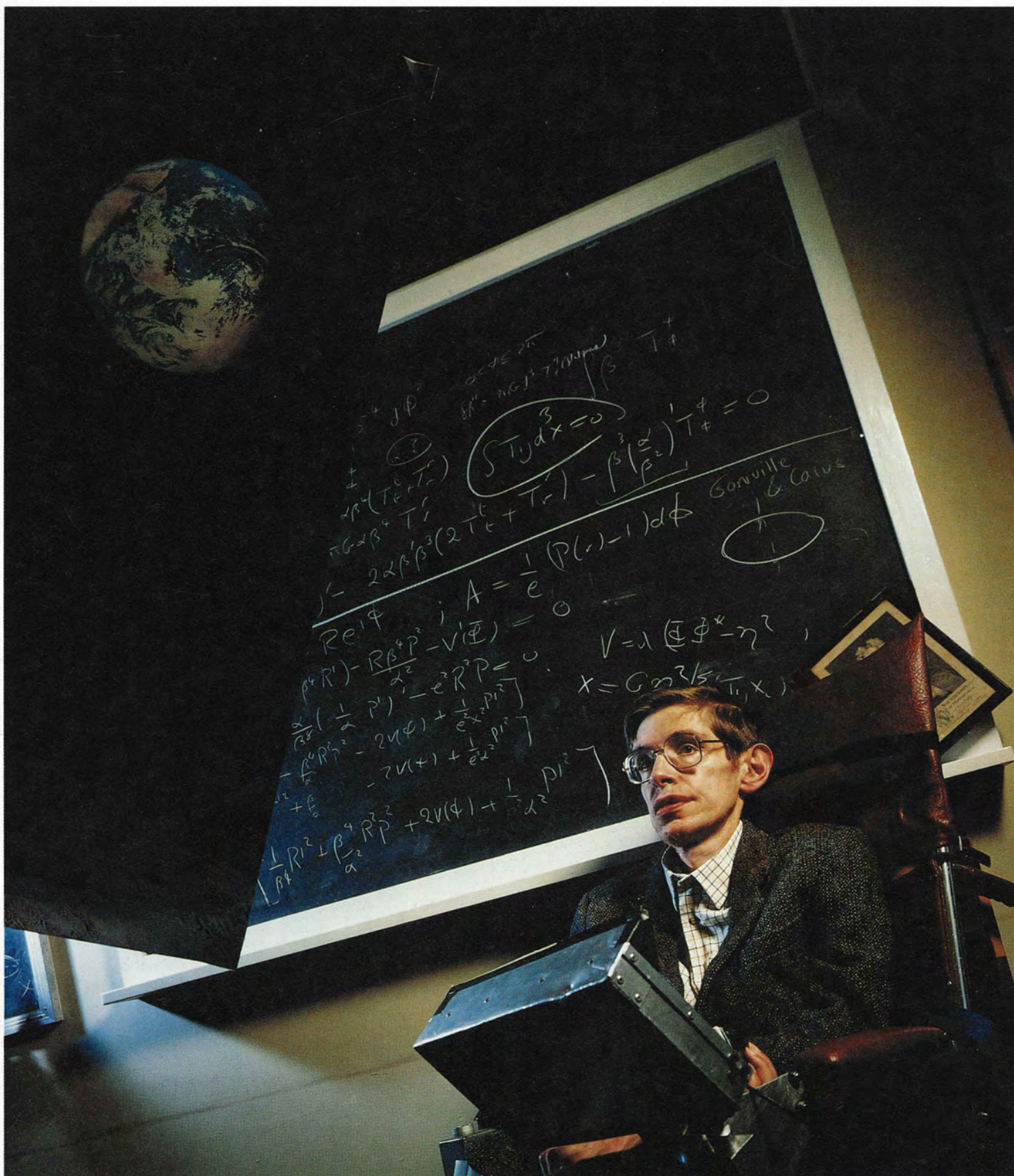


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Faces and stories:
 Errol Morris' film
 'A Brief History of Time'
 is a meditation on
 Stephen Hawking's life
 and work. His present
 is captured in David
 Gamble's portrait, above;
 a still photograph from
 Morris' film shows his
 youth, opposite

THE SHAPE OF TIME

Errol Morris talks about murderers, film, philosophy, and Stephen Hawking, with Russell Lack

● Errol Morris' long-gestated film *A Brief History of Time*, is not so much a film of Stephen Hawking's best-selling book on cosmology as a meditation upon its author. Hawking suffers from a rare, progressive and ultimately terminal motor-neurone disease which has over the last twenty-five years deprived him of movement and speech. He now communicates to the world, and to his theoretical (and discrete) universe, through a sophisticated computer keyboard built into his wheelchair. Hawking's work is inseparable from his physical condition. Indeed, the belief that he would die from his disease by the age of thirty was the catalyst he needed to begin working.

Morris' film balances both life and work, as Hawking's synthesised voiceover (now his 'real' voice) narrates his life chronologically, pausing to allow a rich gallery of British eccentrics (family, friends and colleagues) to testify to his remarkable personality and talents. It's a warm film, one that allows its elements time to breathe. Exquisitely designed by Ted Bafaloukos, it has the feel of something more than a documentary. Interviews take place in studio sets, sparsely furnished re-creations of suburban living rooms which give an unusual sense of space. In formal compositions, subjects are sharply focused and richly lit: Hawking's mother, dressed in black, looms like a figure from a Vermeer painting. Pauses in thought are represented by fade-outs, to resume with the next sentence. Hawking himself is always presented in extreme close-up, a corporeal giant gazing out at the computer screen that provides him with the vocabulary that links with his electronic voicebox.

The other elements in the film are more commonplace documentary techniques: montages of photographs, geo-animations and loca-

tion shots linked via a beautifully subdued score by Philip Glass. The film bears many of the visual hallmarks of Morris' earlier films, particularly *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), and gives the sense of a story moving inexorably towards its ending. There is little attempt to inject drama into the juxtaposition of faces and stories; rather, the film is a calm arrangement of materials. At times, Morris' films appear almost as meta-documentaries: exposed skeletons of style, menus of stylistic choices available to the film-maker. What emerges is a healthy self-awareness (as opposed to self-consciousness) curiously missing from the work of many British non-fiction film-makers.

If there is a unifying theme within Morris' films it would seem to rest in problems of epistemology. Morris uses the documentary form to examine the ways in which each of us sees the world, to present a composite reality where perception is an amalgam of points of view. A world whose sense is relative. Significantly, Morris was a graduate student in philosophy before turning to film-making.

"It was a long time ago. I was a post-graduate student in philosophy of science at Berkeley. I found that I was losing interest in philosophy and becoming much more interested in mass murderers. I conducted some interviews with a number of convicted murderers in prison; I think probably it was a certain dissatisfaction that I felt with being a student. The murderers, I've often thought, came out of a very simple principle – much better to *be* a murderer than to *become* one. I went on from mass murderers to film-making.

"At Berkeley there was a wonderful place to watch movies, the Pacific Film Archive, where I went from watching one or two movies a year to two or three hundred. And I decided that this was what I wanted to do. All the stories in my films have a philosophical component to them, or at least I like to think they do. Stories about people in search of something, stories about self-deception. The limits of what you can know. I'm not sure that there's anything to compare the films to. I've never believed that there's one kind, or two or even three kinds of cinema. I think that when you come down to it there are only two kinds of movie – good movies and bad movies – and I just hope to be making good ones".

Morris' early films – *Gates of Heaven* (1978) and *Vernon, Florida* (1981) – are a passport into the little-known backwaters of the US. *Vernon, Florida* is a hallucinatory journey into a small community of swamp dwellers – a succession of increasingly bizarre interviews detailing the everyday concerns and ambitions of the people of Vernon constructed without prejudice but with a storyteller's ear for arrangement. ►



◀ *Gates of Heaven* is an altogether more strange project, something like a Diane Arbus photograph brought to life.

"All good documentary film-making, I think, ends up as a species of anthropology. In the case of *Gates of Heaven*, the subject almost chose me. I read a story in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, '500 dead pets go to Napa', which was about a pet cemetery that went bankrupt and all the pets had to be exhumed and moved to another pet cemetery, and that became the story of the movie, at least indirectly. I started to meet the people who were part of the story and realised that I had a terrific movie on my hands. The subjects of this film, the owners of the more successful pet cemetery, had an odd world view, which at the same time was strangely familiar. It was the juxtaposition between the different attitudes that interested me". As a result of making the film, Morris won a bet with Werner Herzog, who was obliged to boil and eat his shoe in front of an invited audience.

Throughout the 80s, Morris had a hard time finding the money to get his projects off the ground – the traditional problem of the non-fiction film with its extended production schedules and uncertain audience. For some four years, he was involved in the research and preparation for the one project that did find its way into production, *The Thin Blue Line*, a real life story of truth and injustice, constructed as an investigation into the case of twenty-eight-year-old Randall Adams, on whom a death sentence was passed in 1977 for the alleged murder of a policeman in Dallas, Texas. Through interviews with the key witnesses and members of the judiciary, the film shows a succession of lies and inaccuracies in the preparation of the prosecution case that led to Adams' retrial and subsequent acquittal.

"I stumbled on the story by accident. I was making a documentary called *Doctor Death*, which I'm still working on. That film is about a scientist who is brought in by the state at death penalty trials to say whether or not a defendant is likely to be violent at some point in the future. His testimonials are so convincing that in some 50 per cent of the cases he is involved with, the state is awarded the death penalty. Hence his name, *Doctor Death* – a real modern-day soothsayer. I was interviewing a number of people on death row and I met one guy who had been convicted of the murder of a cop in 1977. He told me the classic line, it's a line that you always hear in prison, he told me that he didn't do it. But from that point on I became trapped in his story over the course of a three-year investigation until I finished the movie, which fortunately led to his release. Eighteen months later, he tried to sue me because he thought I'd gotten rich from the movie and

US TELEVISION AND DOCUMENTARY

Funded and produced largely by television networks, the contemporary US non-fiction film resembles an endangered species bred in captivity and exhibited primarily for its prestige value to the broadcaster.

If documentary has been dominated over the last three decades less by enduring concerns than by stars such as Fred Wiseman, Bruce Conner, the Maysles brothers and Ross McElwee, this may be partly because television – due to its commercial imperatives and need to create ratings for advertisers – has failed to exploit documentary's traditional function of addressing

continuing social maladies.

There has definitely been a movement away from the traditional quasi-anthropological documentary into more overtly personal uses of the form. Film-makers such as James Klein ('Union Road', 1975 and 'Seeing Red', 1983) and Peter Davis ('Hearts and Minds', 1974) have taken as their starting points existing archive footage, re-editing it to their own ends, levelling criticism not at the traditional institutional targets of the non-fiction film, but at subjects as broad as labour history and American foreign policy.

Others have moved the form in the direction of 'long form' studies of individuals, deconstructing the conventions of biographical portraiture. Robert Epstein's

'The Times of Harvey Milk' (1984) offers an engaging portrait of a personality which attempts to probe both the psychology of the individual and the political impact of Milk's brief career, throwing in a conspiracy theory or two for good measure. The Maysles brothers' 1975 'Grey Gardens' is a verité-style portrait of Big Edie and Little Edie Bouvier, mother and daughter renegades of the Kennedy clan, captured living in a state of manorial decay in New York State's Hamptons. Nothing much happens, visitors come and go, a miserable birthday party takes place, but the pleasure of the film (whose length far exceeds that of conventional television slots) comes from the extreme intimacy the film-makers enjoyed with their subjects.

since then we haven't spoken. But despite the rather dismal end to the story, I'm very pleased that I was able to help him, that I was able to do something... good".

The Thin Blue Line reveals much about Morris' technique, less as a director than as an assembler of 'facts'. The film has a collage structure and is predominantly composed of first-person interviews. These interviews act like jigsaw pieces in an assembly of detailed temporal and spatial information about an incident that lasted no more than a few minutes late one night eight years earlier somewhere out on the Dallas freeway. In a radical break with his earlier practices of incorporating the interview settings within the general settings of his films, Morris deliberately isolates each of his witnesses. Each interview is presented within a demarcated boundary, immaculately lit, almost 'colour coded'. The shooting of the policeman too is presented as successive fragments of recreation throughout the film. The shooting is never seen, but small details from the scene of the incident are invested with the hyperrealism of advertising photography – the lush sweep of car-body, the slow-motion explosion of a milkshake hitting the ground of that Dallas freeway, and so on.

"The re-enactments in *The Thin Blue Line* are very different in kind from those that you see used in most television journalism. In *The Thin Blue Line*, the re-enactments have an ironic significance; they're illustrations of lies. It's a bit like Kurosawa's *Rashomon* I guess, where you see the same events told from a number of perspectives. In *The Thin Blue Line*, the re-enactments tell you about the different ways in which people were deceived. The film makes no attempt to tell you that *this* is what happened. There's no way I'm saying I was out on that

roadway the night that the cop was murdered.

"I think that there has been a very dangerous tendency in television journalism to put re-enactments on the news in such a way as to suggest that they're not re-enactments at all, but the real thing. A famous example is an American television programme about Felix Bloch, who was accused of espionage. ABC television filmed a re-enactment of him passing a briefcase to a Russian agent; when it was broadcast, the programme-makers 'treated' the tape, deliberately degrading the picture quality to make it look 'authentic'. It was all fake, but ABC didn't feel obliged to tell its audience that. So to me there's a big difference between using a re-enactment that acknowledges that nobody knows what really happened, and one that purports to show you what reality is".

On the surface, the re-creations used in *The Thin Blue Line* might appear to transgress basic requirements of what might be called the documentary's 'objective realism'. But in fact what these distancing devices do is to emphasise the fragmentary nature of a police investigation. Testimonies, like sealed bags of physical evidence, remain passive until combined by the investigator into a wider pattern of converging knowledge, converging evidence, a theory of 'truth' founded in coherence rather than anything else – that dangerous relativism again. *The Thin Blue Line*, with its well-manicured planes of testimony and counter-testimony, presents us with a patchwork of ideas about the presentation of facts. Morris' 'reconstructions' are more like deconstructions – of knowledge, of what can be known about an event. By illustrating the lies of the prosecution, Morris constructs an epistemology in reverse.

The presence of 'fictional' elements within *The Thin Blue Line* distinguishes Morris' ap-

proach from that of veteran film-maker Fredrick Wiseman, who eschews any form of staged interview. What makes such a comparison worthwhile is that both film-makers have chosen to give a name to their approaches. Morris calls his films 'fiction documentaries', in which "the only real things in the film are the people being interviewed and what they say"; Wiseman works within what he calls a 'reality fiction'. Comparing the two film-makers, it is not clear that Morris is any more manipulative of his subjects than is Wiseman – interviews in Wiseman's films are subject to a rigorous process of editing, combined with an adroit use of cutaway shots, not out of deference to the interviewer (ie 'reaction shots'), but to establish the tone of the film. This tone is therefore the result of a complex accumulation of emotive testimonies cut together using a highly associative editing technique, as in *Welfare* (1974), with themes built up through character familiarisation in locations marshalled by Wiseman himself. But Morris seems to combine the effects of Wiseman and the traditional approaches to non-fiction film-making into something quite new.

The success of *The Thin Blue Line* drew Morris to the attention of Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, where producer Gordon Freedman wanted to make a film about the life and work of Stephen Hawking. "I had gone to Steven Spielberg with a completely different project, my 'dog trial' movie. It was there I met Gordon Freedman, and suddenly I was involved with *A Brief History of Time*. Nobody knew at the time that my academic background has been history and philosophy of science and that I already knew some of the central figures involved in modern relativity research".

In so many ways, Stephen Hawking is a perfect subject for Errol Morris. Hawking's work in relativity theory has led to his being called the 'greatest physicist since Einstein', a meaningless title if ever there was one. The piquancy of a man trapped within a wrecked exterior shell postulating a theorem of completeness that could one day explain the origins of the universe fulfils Morris' vision of a cinema constructed on the limits of what we can know. And watching Morris directing the live action sequences of *A Brief History of Time* at Elstree Studios, another similarity springs to mind.

Both Hawking and Morris are men working to a large degree with *a priori* concepts. With Hawking, the rational rather than empirical basis of his theorems is a direct consequence of the discrete 'invisible' elements that are now the standard raw data of theoretical physics; with Morris, the process of film-making itself (in terms of picture composition) seems to be something conducted largely in his head. Mor-

ris appears to be a man drawn to projects more by intellectual attraction than by the technical process of putting a film together. (On set, he relies upon his visual consultant, Ted Bafaloukos, to compose the bulk of the shots, including the finer details of lighting). If the photographic process for Morris has a purely illustrative role, then he may be a completely new kind of documentary film-maker.

"I think it's necessary to make a distinction between movies that use real people and movies that use actors. The movies I've made up to this point have all used real people talking extemporaneously. That basis has been the framework for anything else that I've constructed within the film. That's also true of *A Brief History of Time*. It depends very much upon the actual people involved in this scientific enterprise, particularly Stephen Hawking, who narrates the movie; it's very much about him.

"All of Stephen's work concerns certain kinds of limits – what we can and cannot know. Black holes, event horizons. Contemporary physics is populated by predictors that don't make sense in any conventional way. This becomes an interesting story when connected with Stephen Hawking's life. He's a heroic person; it's hard to spend any time with him without being immensely impressed by him, not simply as a scientific thinker or intellectual, but as a man who has never given up. He's very much there, despite enormous handicaps and disadvantages – he also has a strongly perverse and ironic sense of humour.

"So I'm telling a number of stories; Stephen Hawking and his intellectual development; a story about this area of physics from the 60s to the present time; and about the other people involved in it – a number of colleagues from Russia, the United Kingdom and the US. I



Relative values:
 fragments of the story –
 sometimes colour coded –
 are patched together like
 pieces in a jigsaw to
 illustrate the different
 ways people were deceived
 in Morris' account of
 the murder of a Dallas
 policeman in
 'The Thin Blue Line'

wasn't interested in doing a pure science show held together by graphics about what the birth of the universe might look like, or what a black hole or a neutron star might look like. It's a story of science seen through the eyes of the people who created it".

A Brief History of Time was a co-production between a number of companies including Anglia Television in the UK and TBS in Japan. "The evolution of projects in my career has been dictated by the willingness of people to pay for them. For a long while they weren't backing them, but now I seem to be beginning to find an audience for my work, and that has led to a whole new world of possibilities. For one thing, I'm employed rather than unemployed at the moment, and that in itself represents a gigantic change in my life. I find that it's very hard making a movie, and if you're going to spend a good year or more of your time working on a film you want to make sure that it's going to end up being pretty good, and that you're going to enjoy working on it, otherwise you might as well do something else. This last year I've been directing a lot of commercials, which are terrific in that you gain a lot of experience, and you get paid a lot of money for getting a lot of experience, and the commitment of time is minimal. A project like *A Brief History of Time* means a year or two years of work, and so it's not undertaken lightly".

Morris' 'dog trial' movie, a project he has been nurturing for years, also looks likely to be realised. Its projected title is *The Trial of the King Boots*. "This is the true story of a dog that was put on trial for murder in Detroit in 1984. It's a story that I've wanted to do for a number of years and I'm pleased to say that Steven Spielberg and Amblin Entertainment have agreed to do that movie as well".

Boots was a prize-winning Old English Sheepdog found with blood on his jaws near the body of his owner's mother. The coroner pronounced that the victim, a Mrs Monroe, had died from "multiple bites and slashes caused by the attack of a canine". A second autopsy concluded that she had died from a heart attack, and that she had been bitten just once. King Boots' vet visited his client 'in jail' and found the dog to have a wound on his nose which appeared to have been made by a kitchen fork. Had Mrs Monroe, who often carried kitchen utensils around the house with her, tripped over a sleeping Boots, accidentally stabbing him, been bitten once in return and then died from a heart attack? Acquitted, King Boots died "in rather mysterious circumstances". Apparently, Christopher Walken has expressed great interest in playing King Boots' lawyer.

'A Brief History of Time' is on Channel 4 on 3 May and has recently been released on video by Palace

The creative achievement, rigorously independent vision, tenderness and humour of Tony Richardson are celebrated by Vanessa Redgrave at the opening of a tribute to the director, who died at the end of last year

● One wet, March evening in 1959, Tony Richardson invited the whole cast of *Othello* to a preview of his first feature film, *Look Back in Anger*. We gathered in the small, old cinema in Stratford-upon-Avon after an exciting rehearsal with Paul Robeson.

Thanks to the efforts of Glen Byam Shaw, Tony Quayle, Peggy Ashcroft and many others, the US government had finally given Paul back his passport, taken away from him during the McCarthy period. Paul's freedom to travel and work coincided with the new perspectives on freedom expressed so passionately and humorously in Tony's and John Osborne's film.

I was twenty-two years old. As Richard Burton (Jimmy Porter) walked through the park talking to Helena (Claire Bloom), the camera panned slowly and closely across the faces of elderly men sitting on the park benches. Men robbed of their opportunities and the fruits of their work. Jimmy's passionate invective, his infectious jokes, his noisy, joyous and lamenting trumpet cadenzas, made me certain that the energy and creative lust for life of the young would shatter the stifling and deadly philistinism and bureaucracy of England in the 50s.

Mary Ure's dishevelled beauty in itself broke all cinematic conventions. Until then young actresses in the Rank Organisation that dominated British cinema were kept in two rigid categories. The sluts (mostly played by Diana Dors and Anne Heywood) and the respectable young ladies. Neither category could be dishevelled.

The scene in Tony's film when the market inspector from the town hall (Donald Pleasence) harasses and torments the Asian stall-holder expressed all the cruelty of our English society. At the age of twenty-two, the film made me see my own society more clearly; it made me feel



Lust for life: Harry Andrews and Richardson filming 'Light Brigade', above; Trevor Howard as Lord Cardigan, right

strong in desire and belief that we all must, and could, change everything. Today, my son, also twenty-two and a second-year film student, is equally inspired by, *Look Back in Anger*.

Rita Tushingham's cry, "I'm a very unusual person!" Her dumpy, pregnant, school-skirted figure and ecstatic waving arms, outlined on a pile of rubble in Salford. Tom Courtenay's long-distance run, outstripping all the public school runners. His final victory as he rejects victory for his Borstal prison. These themes, and the cinematic techniques which communicated the stories so powerfully, were pioneered by Tony and all his colleagues who worked on Woodfall films. His *The Border*, with Jack Nicholson, about Mexican migrant workers, and the not-yet-released *Blue Sky*, with Jessica Lange and Tommy Lee Jones, re-explored these principal themes.

On 15 January 1992 about 150 film-makers met at the Curzon cinema for a screening of

The Charge of the Light Brigade in memory of Tony. Riggers, LK, carpenters, sound, camera-men, continuity, designers, editors, ADs, production managers and secretaries, directors, writers, and not a few actors. All had worked on one or more Woodfall films. Their combined CVs would blow several Oscar award ceremonies out of the water. Needless to add, such is the present state of the British film and television industry, most of them today are without work. The most extraordinary, creative talents and skills, all encouraged, developed and embodied in Tony's Woodfall films.

Light Brigade came in just under budget, at a total cost of \$6 million. The very spirit and substance of a society where living ghosts with power create catastrophe communicated with a knowledge, feeling, tenderness and an incredibly comic humour. To my mind, a film that ranks with Tolstoy's novel, *War and Peace*: such films are few.

The satirical animated cartoons, based on the political cartoons of the 1850s, are an extraordinary component in the whole. In the way they deepen the perspective, drive forward the narrative, and counterpose with the actual lives, hopes and fears of the human beings of all classes, whose lives, or hopes, were ended in the Crimean valley.

Working with Tony is remembered by all as the most creative and the most merry experience. He was always encouraging and seeking the specialist input and ideas of his colleagues in all departments. This was rare, and is now even more rare in film-making.

Films can be like great poems. Tony's films are poems created by many people: inspired and encouraged by his gallant, humorous and rigorously independent approach to life.

TONY RICHARDSON AND THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE



Charles Wood remembers writing 'Light Brigade', drinking, appearing before the law, Gielgud – and much more

INTO THE VALLEY

A valley near Ankara in 1967. Day. Turkish soldiers of the Presidential Guard are formed up to charge in *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and actors come to take their places with them. At the front of the 17th Lancers is Captain Morris (Mark Burns), with him Private Corbett (Norman Rossington). John Mollo and I walk over to ask Norman why he's there, sitting on his nag, against all the manuals of drill and contrary to the rules of even this film company war.

Norman leans at us through his grizzle of whiskers: "Because Tony has put me here".

"But you shouldn't be here – you're only a trumpeter – you wouldn't ride with the commanding officer at the head of the 17th Lancers – why has he put you here?"

"Because", explained Private Corbett, "I'm a highly paid feature artist!"

Which clinched it.

● The problem about writing about writing the screenplay of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is that I can hardly remember doing it. I don't have much recall for anything beyond the day before yesterday except insults – and the film was made in 1967. I do remember that after a meeting with Lindsay Anderson, who had originally wanted to do *The Knack*, I wrote a silly letter to Oscar Lewenstein of Woodfall Films to say that I didn't; nor did I want to be considered for *Light Brigade*. My arrogance had to do with the fact that I knew very little about anything. I didn't know, for instance, that Lindsay Anderson was Lindsay Anderson, or that John Osborne was already writing *Light Brigade*. On the other hand, I now remember that I was particularly proud of a phrase in the letter saying categorically that I would not "...hold a lance for Osborne" (whatever that meant), so I must have known he was doing it. I had an agent in those days who was not one to let my silliness get in the way of something she thought I ought to be glad to be offered. She worked on Oscar. I did eventually write the screenplay of *The Knack*, and my letter wasn't held against me when John Osborne asked me to take up the lance he was being forced by circumstances to drop – perhaps Oscar hadn't shown it to him.

I was handed the job on a plate by John, who had already done all the real work, and by Tony Richardson, who I think needed me for reasons, as ever, devious. Woodfall Films had found itself involved in a lawsuit to do with Laurence Harvey and his owning the rights to *The Reason Why* – a brilliant, wonderfully readable, very successful speculation on the reason for the Charge of the Light Brigade by Cecil Woodham-

Smith. I shall never know what was going on, but it is possible that had I been a more 'professional' screenwriter, established, capable of producing a standard comprehensible screenplay, I would not have been approached by Tony, who I am sure wanted from me a first draft document he could use to bewilder the chaps in wigs. This I duly produced, three hundred pages or so of it, wildly surreal, anachronistic, savage, overwritten, pornographic, crammed with art student polemic, optimistically ironic, bitter about class and privilege; everything I felt about the British Empire, the British army, England under Queen Victoria and the first of the modern wars inspired by and based on Stephen Vincent Benet's 'John Brown's Body', Eisenstein's published screenplay of *Ivan the Terrible* and John Osborne's *Tom Jones*.

I can't remember thinking about Vietnam – which may seem at variance with the things subsequently written about *Light Brigade*, but if it is ever seen again, it should be obvious that Richardson's film is about the feudalism of regiments, Englishness, class, and the apparent necessity to hone and test such dubiousness in war, preferably on a foreign field. In those days, almost everything about war was excused and justified by being 'about Vietnam really', and sometimes it was politic to suggest so in order to get the money and the attention. It wasn't, of course – it was/is as much about the Falklands and the Gulf, and as little about the Crimea.

When I was a newly promoted acting local unpaid Lance Corporal, a rank peculiar to the now defunct 17/21st Lancers – who rode in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava as the 17th – and signified by a single solitary hovering stripe on one arm only, below a bright white lanyard, I had sat in a cookhouse in Westphalia and been told of the death of General Wolfe at Quebec, of a regiment of horse with skull and crossed bones motto raised in his memory, and of the Charge of the Light Brigade: that celebration of death by sword, lance, shot, shell and metre – a ghastly mistake draped in a mantle of heroism.

"What was that all about?", I asked as we stumbled from the cookhouse, our minds reeling from the facts and implications of derring-do-as-you're-told and not reasoning why.

"All gets pissed Balaclava day", I was assured by a friendly local, similarly placed, acting unpaid – and we did, come the day.

So did we when I delivered the script to 11a Curzon Street, the offices of Woodfall, or rather, when I came up from Bristol to be told what Tony might think of it. "It's very good, have you had breakfast? Would you like some bacon or something? Why not? Aren't you hungry? It's very good, I laughed a lot, I think you ought to be given a medal..."

He presented me with a yellow and blue ribbed silver medal for the Crimea somebody had probably given him. He was wearing it pinned by a safety pin to his shirt; bars for the battle of Alma, Inkerman, Sebastopol.

"... But I think it's too long, and I don't think we can have Queen Victoria fucked by a bear, not even a very funny Russian bear, do you?" So we didn't.

Nor did we have reveille played by the whole

band instead of the usual duty trumpeter as we had in the regiment on Balaclava day, or mugs of rum and coffee ladled out to the private troopers still in their beds by sergeants and orderly corporals from dixies; but we did have lots of Dom Perignon and I went away to start again at the beginning and try to be less exuberant, and try to remember that there were other regiments involved, particularly the 11th Hussars who wore the cherry-coloured overalls Tony was taken with, and: "I think we ought to have a lot more of Clarissa and more women. Valerie (Newman), you can write a part for Valerie if you like". So I did.

The first draft, ready to be shown in court as evidence that Tony Richardson had lost his marbles and was certainly not intending to make a film based on *The Reason Why*, or for that matter on anything else approaching sanity or accessibility, might have helped to have the injunction lifted, if any of the wigs read more than half a dozen pages without getting a headache. There was one sublime morning when I was taken by Tony to a house in the country where sat a besuited wig, and introduced as the writer of the gibberish put forward as evidence on his knee. Wig was very kind, very polite and obviously delighted with the three hundred pages on his lap, not a word of which can he have understood, though perhaps I'm wrong, and it was just his extreme 'does he take sugar?' courtesy misled me.

Harvey settled out of court for much more money than anyone got to write the script or appear in the film, and a part: John Osborne's promised part. I don't know, I don't know, I didn't know anything that was going on, I was full of Dom Perignon and wearing a medal and writing reams.

Most of the Clarissa (Vanessa Redgrave) stuff I lifted from John's first script, and the research had all been done by the meticulous John Mollo, every button, every detail of the battle including something I had thought to be regimental folklore: the butchers of the 17th Lancers hurrying up fresh from the shambles desperate not to be left out of their ride into another mess of entrails, horse and human.

I had invented a language based on dips into Carlyle, Thackeray and contemporary memoirs. Once you find a language for characters to speak fitting the mood and aim of the film the rest seems to follow, though it wasn't easy to get actors to speak it properly at first. Tony gave me permission to call 'Cut!' when I heard it going wrong, words dropped, apostrophes creeping in: the dialogue had to be said exactly as written and was for me the framework of the film, set the style, was a determining factor in the way characters wore their costumes, stood, ate their food, danced. For straight backs, as a substitute for a wooden board, try a rigid and unfamiliar syntax and have the writer standing with the director behind the camera every day. I never dared exercise the right given me to stop a take, and actually never needed to. I'm sure Tony knew I never would.

Whenever anything new had to be written in the field to clarify something or extend something or obscure the lack of something I gave the lines to Lord Raglan (John Gielgud) ►

Weight of the past:
Harry Andrews as Lord
Lucan in 'The Charge
of the Light Brigade',
a representative of the
old hypocrisies and
hierarchies doomed
to bring all to death
and destruction



Charging into a new
world: David Hemmings
(Captain Nolan), the
quintessential image
of youth, full of an
impossible idealism,
defiance and desire



Radical needs: Vanessa
Redgrave as Clarissa
Codrington, one of those
sacrificed by the old
corrupted world represented
by the Crimean war

◀ when I could; he could sight-read my oddly punctuated dialogue, rarely asking for clarification. The early morning scene with the Polish deserter came about in this way, written the night before.

Lord Raglan gives the uncomprehending Polish deserter offering information a wiggling, and refuses to listen to what he has to say: "Come as a spy! Young man do you have a mother? I hope you have not. That your mother should hear of this!"

This whole scene started with an incident John Gielgud had been told about by a friend who had heard he was playing Raglan, I think. I don't know, I don't know, I've lost all the first versions of the script as well as the new bits I wrote in Turkey, so I can't check; but I've still got John Gielgud's letter to Tony suggesting a scene where Raglan, waking up, sees French cavalry clattering into view and raises the alarm, still fighting a long-gone war, long-gone enemies. It's up there on the screen, and I remember the night I wrote it vividly because a grand piano without legs had appeared in the apartment in Ankara we were living in, while we were out: one doesn't forget things like that. Two days later the piano had gone, to be reunited with its legs, I hope. Which brings to mind the day we dressed amputees from Ankara hospitals in the uniforms of the Light Brigade for the final scene of the return from the valley. The extras sat around Dix-like waiting in the sun and somebody asked of the appalling Eddie Fowlie, blood guns and guts a speciality: "Shouldn't they be moved?" To which he replied: "Nothing to do with me, fucking hand-props aren't they?"

That very first draft of three hundred pages has never been seen since it was entered in evidence at the Old Bailey milud, or wherever it was, if it was. Not by me at any rate, some wig may have it. Some of the less grotesque elements turned up in the linking drawings by Richard Williams.

I've seen the film again quite recently and I'm astonished. I can't believe I wrote it. John Osborne said to me when he saw it at the same time: "Only you could have got him to make it like that, I couldn't do it." I don't quite understand what he meant. Tony got the film he wanted and used me to get it, the way he used us all, the way all directors do but usually with less charm and infectious cajolery.

It's a good film, misunderstood and under-rated by those who write about it still, but what do they know? They think it's only a film, they haven't paraded to remember. They haven't got pissed Balaclava day or sent telegrams to the others – the other remnants of famous regiments now defunct or Umpty-Umptieth-Umpty Queens something – congratulating them. They don't thrill as a dress belt is buckled in *Dances with Wolves* or see that Nolan's ride is Henry Fonda's in *Fort Apache*, or note the near drill perfect twist of Mogg's sword wrist (Alan Dobie) as he charges into the Valley of Death, or fight the pain in the throat as the impossibly young Colonel walks through his advancing black 54th Massachusetts to his death in *Glory*. I don't think they laugh either.

Andy Medhurst reflects on 'Light Brigade' as a film of the late 60s and protest politics

WAR GAMES

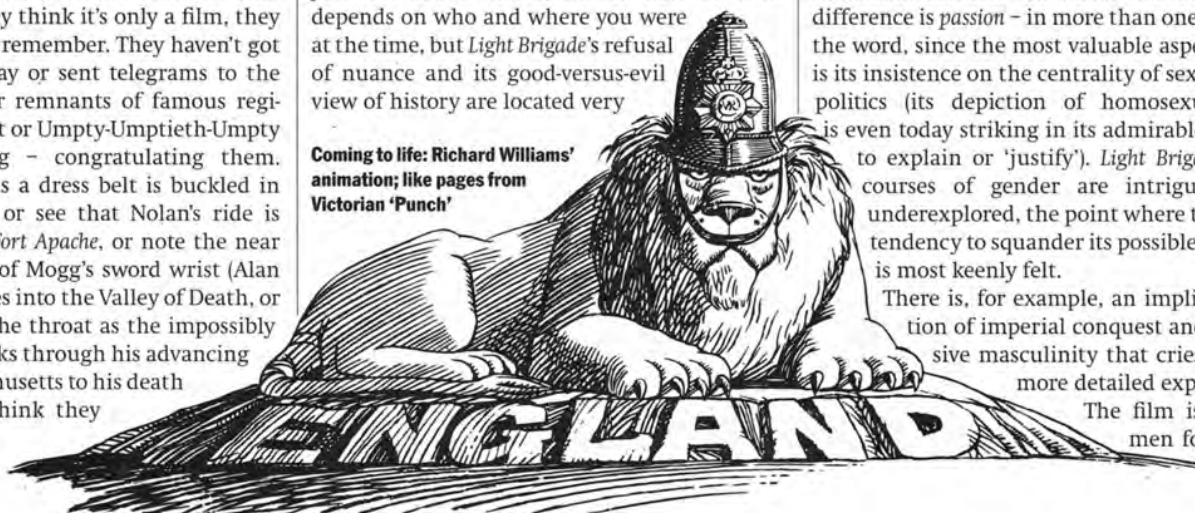
● Few films become a topic for debate in the Letters columns of the *Times*, but in April 1968 there was an invigoratingly bad-tempered squabble about *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Tony Richardson, weary of the negative reviews his films had been receiving, attempted to spike critics' guns by refusing to hold a press showing. Lest this be interpreted as personal pique, he wrote to the *Times* declaring his decision to be on behalf not just of himself, but of his fellow film-makers. He labelled Fleet Street's reviewers "superficial", compared them to "spoilert and demanding children", and, in a flourish of rhetorical excess, branded them "a group of acidulated intellectual eunuchs hugging their prejudices like feather boas".

Needless to say, such an assault did not go unanswered, though the wounded and defensive response of Felix Barker, then chairman of the Critics' Circle, lacked Richardson's splenetic fervour. What is perhaps more surprising is the generally fair and measured reviews *The Charge of the Light Brigade* received, particularly since the reviewers had had to risk soiling their feather boas by attending public screenings.

To see the film today is to be confronted with what could, simplistically, be called an ambitious failure. It has great sweep and scope, contains one truly memorable performance, and wears its ideological heart on its sleeve with an impressively un-British-cinema-like directness. But at the same time it sprawls, raising fascinating issues that it fails to follow through, its aspirations towards the global and the epic too often coming across as lack of focus.

It is, above all, a film of its time, and it is that cultural context I want to explore rather than the mannerisms of 'authorship' that would qualify it as a 'Richardson film'. *Light Brigade* was made and released in a period when easy slogans were the epitome of political chic. How you feel about that fetishised date of 1968 depends on who and where you were at the time, but *Light Brigade's* refusal of nuance and its good-versus-evil view of history are located very

Coming to life: Richard Williams' animation; like pages from Victorian 'Punch'



much in its social moment. It's a protest march of a film, with Vietnam a structuring, unspoken presence.

There is also, however, a very late 60s ambivalence towards the iconography of the military. Don't forget that lots of those who marched shouting "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh" were otherwise scouring Portobello Road for newly fashionable Victorian uniforms. The cover of the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper* is a key reference point here, and indeed there are times when David Hemmings' Captain Nolan, all baby face and slightly unconvincing whiskers, looks uncannily like Paul McCartney.

The casting of Hemmings and Vanessa Redgrave together sets off reverberations of *Blow-up* (1966) and their moral superiority in the film, their status as tragic outsiders cruelly repressed by hierarchies and hypocrisies hence takes on a double importance. Schematically, they are the 60s (for what more 60s film is there than *Blow-up*?) struggling to break free from the weight of convention and tradition embodied in all those Gielguds and Howards of the British cultural establishment. Youth knows best, particularly if youth is beautiful.

Richardson was not the only ex-Oxbridge, Royal Court director to respond to the late 60s by deploying the imagery of sexy, youthful rebels versus dessicated, dictatorial institution. Lindsay Anderson's *If...* was released a few months after *Light Brigade* and the two films make interesting companion pieces, particularly in the respective uses of Hemmings and Malcolm McDowell as pin-up boys against the system. In many respects, though, it's the ways in which the two films differ that are the most illuminating, and those differences are most clearly spelled out by their endings. Both conclude with gunfire and death, but while the shooting in *If...* signals the beginning of the revolution, the waste and carnage of *Light Brigade* is unrelievedly bleak. Anderson's optimism, Richardson's pessimism – while both rely on emotiveness rather than complexity of thought, the romanticism of the former struck the greater contemporary chord, as the subsequent reputation of the two films shows.

What also distinguishes *If...* is the sense of personal urgency, the palpable relish with which Anderson exorcises his own ghosts. *Light Brigade*, by contrast, remains generalised and abstracted, a well-intentioned lecture (with maps and slides) that lacks the ire and fire of Anderson's sermon. The factor that makes the difference is *passion* – in more than one sense of the word, since the most valuable aspect of *If...* is its insistence on the centrality of sexuality to politics (its depiction of homosexual love is even today striking in its admirable refusal to explain or 'justify'). *Light Brigade's* discourses of gender are intriguing but underexplored, the point where the film's tendency to squander its possible insights is most keenly felt.

There is, for example, an implied equation of imperial conquest and aggressive masculinity that cries out for more detailed exploration.

The film is full of men for whom

Filmography

TONY RICHARDSON

born Cecil Antonio Richardson,
5 June 1928, Shipley, England
died 14 November 1991, Los Angeles

Films as director

Mamma Don't Allow (1955) 22 mins
(co-dir/sc with Karel Reisz)

Look Back in Anger (1959) 101 mins

The Entertainer (1960) 96 mins
"I started with 'Look Back in Anger' and 'The Entertainer' because I happened to have directed the plays on stage, and it became possible to use these as a means of starting making films. I never,



The Entertainer (1960)

ever, want to make a film of a play I have staged again. I think the two media work in a completely different way, and once materials, stories, characters and subjects are put in a particular mold, however much you try to translate them into a different mold they are still a bit stuck as they were – though I think 'The Entertainer' is much less so than 'Look Back'".

Sanctuary (1960) 90 mins

"I came to do 'Sanctuary' through directing on Broadway. I had also been discussing making a film for Darryl Zanuck for some while. I went to Hollywood for a number of reasons. The difficulties of the production set-up in England was one. Another was that I liked the idea of certain things in the script and the evocation of a certain period. I thought at the time that by going to Hollywood I would be much freer and be able to work in a more interesting way than it turned out".

A Taste of Honey (1961)

100 mins (and p/co-sc)

"In 'A Taste of Honey' I wanted to force a much rougher style on the film, and to force myself to shoot in, I hope, a freer way. I strongly believe actors are much better when they have to work in the conditions of location. If ever I did an interior set for a realistic film in a studio again I would never allow them to take walls out. I would force everyone to work within the limitations of the room because I think anything else is a sort of theatrical viewpoint and that this is the really cinematic way".

The Loneliness of the Long Distance

Runner (1962) 104 mins (and p)

Tom Jones (1963) 128 mins (and p)

The Loved One (1965) 117 mins

(original running time 119 mins)

"Curiously enough it had its biggest

initial success in the very places where they thought it wouldn't have any success, the Bible Belt and the Middle West. It is a cult film now, shown constantly in art movie houses and on television, and there is a generation that's grown up to whom it's the first film they really loved".

Mademoiselle (1966) 103 mins

"'Mademoiselle' was a film that I particularly loved making. It was an absolutely magical experience... The only thing that you could say against it was that the casting of the man wasn't perfect. Originally it was going to be Marlon Brando, who would have been wonderful: it would have been the 'Last Tango' of its time if we'd had Marlon. The big night of this man's orgy with Mademoiselle is incredibly, marvellously imagined by Genet; in a poetic way it suggests all kinds of sexual behaviour and aberrations without being totally explicit".

The Sailor from Gibraltar (1966)

91 mins (and co-sc)

Red and Blue (1967)

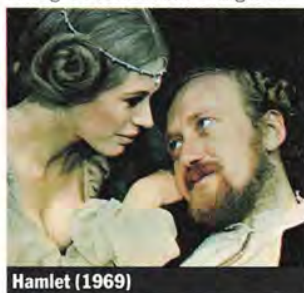
35 mins (and co-sc)

The Charge of the Light Brigade

(1968) 141 mins

Hamlet (1969) 117 mins

"It was a 'Hamlet' in close-ups. I've always felt that Shakespeare films are unsatisfactory because the rhythm of the text and the rhythms of the performances have their own truth, and the minute that you change a camera angle you create a different world which isn't the same as Shakespeare's. So I thought it would be interesting to do



Hamlet (1969)

a film which was entirely based on devaluation of the image, using only close-ups and letting the performances and the words carry the whole thing. It's not perhaps a film really, but something like a visual LP of 'Hamlet'".

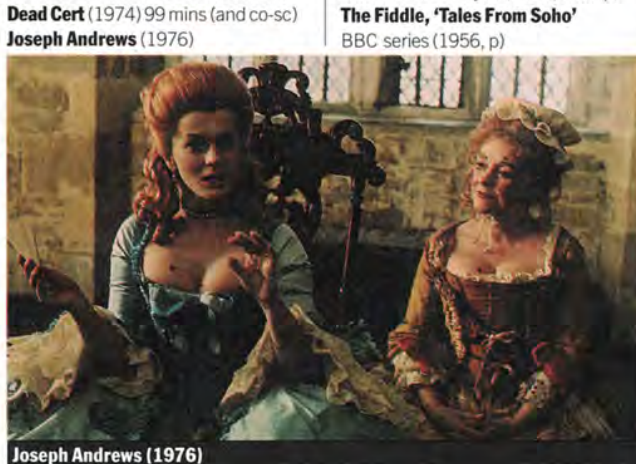
Laughter in the Dark (1969) 104 mins

Ned Kelly (1970) 103 mins (and co-sc)

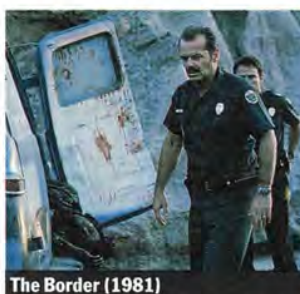
A Delicate Balance (1973) 134 mins

Dead Cert (1974) 99 mins (and co-sc)

Joseph Andrews (1976)



Joseph Andrews (1976)



The Border (1981)

104 mins (and co-sc)

"I always liked Joseph Andrews. It was always in the bank of projects in one's head, as something one would make some time. Fielding has a great sense of comedy and I thought I should do a film which would make people laugh – a funny, popular film. He is absolutely an English humanist writer, in the line of Shakespeare and Dickens".

The Border (1981) 108 mins

"'The Border' is a very serious film, about an amazing circumstance – there's no situation like it anywhere. You've got the richest, most powerful country in the world side-by-side with one of the poorest. It's a classic confrontation – the most amazing juxtaposition of the Third World and the West that one could imagine... It takes a while for some of my movies to be discovered. But then, finally, they tend to go on and on".

The Hotel New Hampshire (1984)

108 mins (and sc)

Blue Sky (1990, waiting release)

101 mins

TV films/plays

The Apollo of Bellac (1955, BBC

series 'Appointment with Drama')

25 mins (and p)

Othello (1955, BBC) 120 mins

Look Back in Anger (1956, Granada,

'Play of the Week') 90 mins

A Subject of Scandal and

Concern (1960, BBC, 'The Sunday

Night Play') 60 mins (and p)

A Death in Canaan (1978) 120 mins

Penalty Phase (1986) 120 mins

Beryl Markham: A Shadow on the Sun

(1988) 240 mins

The Phantom of the Opera (1990)

185 mins

Other films (not as director)

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning

(1960, co-p)

Girl with Green Eyes (1963, exec-p)

The Fiddle, 'Tales From Soho'

BBC series (1956, p)

war holds an erotic charge, while weakness or failure is labelled feminine – soldiers suffering from cholera are told that they should not "drop dead of the vapours, like girls". Trevor Howard's Lord Cardigan memorably announces that watching his troops parade and drill makes him feel "randified", and his subsequent seduction of Mrs Duberly (Jill Bennett), though somewhat queasily played for laughs (nodding back to the Redman/Finney encounter in *Tom Jones*), further establishes links between military campaigns and sexual strategies.

The trembling, whispered, impossible relationship between Hemmings and Redgrave (she is the wife of his best friend) is the film's counter to this, an affair based on the purity of mutual desire rather than status and control. After Hemmings leaves for the Crimea, Redgrave waits and pines, radiant in Pre-Raphaelite browns and golds, but the narrative abandons her just as surely as Hemmings does, preferring to deal with the politically easier options of attacking the war itself. It's one of those miraculous performances Redgrave can sometimes produce, a role that is scandalously underwritten, but which she manages to invest with more pain, anguish and dignity than the rest of the cast put together. She is the only character whose emotional complexities escape the diagrammatic archetypes on offer elsewhere.

She isn't, in other words, a cartoon. The film's use of Richard Williams' animation is one of its more celebrated aspects. Williams produces images that are like pages from Victorian *Punch* come to life, wicked and witty caricatures, a welcome reminder that animation can be adult and unsentimental and as far from Disneyisms as it's possible to get, but their very success tends to highlight the limitations of the live action sequences. The actors embody attitudes and ideas, but they never convince. The usual excuse in such cases is to invoke the name of Brecht, but this film is no *Mother Courage*. More pertinently, it's no *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969) either, for that film's structuring metaphor of the music hall enabled it to make far more telling points than Richardson's righteouslyness can manage.

In conclusion, it might be interesting to consider *Light Brigade* in terms of what passes for British cinema today. For even if it is a failure, at least it fails on a heroic scale. It is unapologetically big, particularly when set against the pretty miniatures that dominate most seasons of *Film on Four* or *Screen Two*.

The virtue of *Light Brigade*'s size is literal as well as metaphorical, its expansive panavision tableaux a welcome reminder that there was once a time when British films weren't conceived under the shadow of television inevitability. It's also a world away from the mummified heritage England of Merchant Ivory, seeking to interrogate and accuse the past rather than bottle and sell it like so much cinematic marmalade. In many ways, *Light Brigade* is analogous to the *Charge* itself – misguided, wrong-headed and littered with casualties, but evoking a doomed splendour that makes it impossible to forget.

'*Light Brigade*' will be screened at the NFT on 17 and 18 May as part of the Tony Richardson season

BLACK AND WHITE



Michael X, black radical, finally hanged for murder, is the subject of John Akomfrah's film 'Who Needs a Heart'. Pervaiz Kahn talks to the director

Pervaiz Khan: Why did you decide to make 'Who Needs a Heart'?

John Akomfrah: We tried for a year and a half to raise the money to do something more narratively led about the 60s using Michael X as our point of entry, but all our efforts were to no avail. We then had to rethink what it would be possible to say about the 60s, and more particularly about black and white relationships, in eighty minutes with considerably less capital. What attracted you to Michael as a character through which we can look at the 60s?

He seemed to be a hybrid figure: on the one hand a criminal, but clearly also an important political figure, a public figure. I was intrigued by his chameleon-like ability to move in and out of particular social and cultural situations: one minute he'd be in Bradford with a group of Asian workers, next minute he's in London with a group of hippies. The film came from my sense of intrigue.

How did that sense of intrigue translate itself into what appears on screen?

What we have now was determined by a number of factors. One was clearly the amount of money we were able to raise. *Who Needs a Heart* was a project that needed at least four or five weeks to shoot; in the end we had only enough money for three. But the most significant variable was that having been enthusiastic about Michael, I then set about trying to find out from people who had known him, who he was. I was shocked by the response we got; a number of people didn't want to talk about him, were very embarrassed by what he stood for. People

are still angry with him and that anger was transferred on to us. People felt that we were being disrespectful to the 60s to take what was obviously a pariah figure and use him as our entry into the period when there were far worthier figures.

Almost every character in the film is based in some way on Michael. My feeling was that we should make a film in which there was a group of people all under the sway of this guy, grappling with what it meant to live together, with what it was like to make politics, without our commenting on whether or not they were good at that politics or whether the politics they were trying to create, a personal politics, was more useful than any other kind. In that sense Michael was an exemplary figure: if nothing else, he was a master of gesture, of rhetoric. And those things seemed important in a drama about how people – black and white, women and men – might become a group. Having said that, I hadn't envisaged *Who Needs a Heart* as a film about politics; I saw it as a film about people who are caught up in politics.

Having made almost half a dozen films on various aspects of the 'black experience', how in retrospect do you feel about being seen as a 'black film-maker'? Prior to the formation

of the black film/video workshops in the mid-80s, there were black film-makers around, but the term was used largely in a pejorative sense. If you called someone a black film-maker, you were saying that person was a ghetto film-maker, incapable of particular kinds of things, unable to speak general truths. We turned that on its head and said 'yes, we are speaking from ghettos, we are black film-makers, and we've made that an issue of pride rather than shame'.

I remember taking *Testament* to Cannes; we were standing in the British pavilion and a white critic came up and said, "Now you've got a film in Cannes don't you think it's time you stopped calling yourselves black film-makers?". This was as recently as 1988, and people still felt that race and film-making were mutually exclusive. For us, the black film-maker was a specific category that meant dealing with ideas, issues and motifs which emanate from black cultures or have some purchase on those cultures.

There's a tension, isn't there, between what people expect of you as cultural/political activists and the expectations people have of you as film-makers...

I now accept the baggage that goes with saying "I am a black film-maker", I accept the burden of representation. I accept the desire people have that you should speak not just aesthetically, but address cultural questions as well.

The challenge with all our films is to search for some intimacy, some



Now and then: a view of the 60s, top; John Akomfrah filming on the set of 'Who Needs a Heart', above

moment of solitude, for singularity in the morass of generality. The desire is to define a small corner from which we can speak something that is important to us and consequently something which can inform general debate. In *Who Needs a Heart*, for instance, we've tried to stick closely to what we felt was important rather than what anybody would demand we say about the 60s. This is a continuation of the concerns of the Black Audio Film Collective – the need to forge a dialogue between history and memory, to give narrative to political questions and so on.

Where are you now?

I think anyone who watches our films closely will notice after *Who Needs a Heart* that there will be a change. There is a baggage of concerns that culminate in that film. I don't think they'll resurface again in the same way.

Obviously the period of grant aid that made that kind of work possible is now running out.

Working miracles with small amounts of money is proving more and more difficult. I don't think it will be possible to shoot a film like *Testament* on £20,000 or to make *Who Needs a Heart* on £140,000 any more. We were marginal before, we're still marginals now, but now people think the margins are sexy, attractive, politically important and all the rest of it. I'm also concerned that the set of ideas and cultural concerns that we nurtured and formulated on the margins are placed squarely at the door of the mainstream. I don't want them to be buried. If we don't use those knowledges to pry open certain things we would be letting some very significant people off the hook. My concern with being a black film-maker is completely intertwined with my concern with what constitutes British cinema.

Back to 'Who Needs a Heart'. The film is also about sexuality, desire and miscegenation. There's a constant crossing of female-male and black-white lines and swapping of passive and dominant roles, but the way these are handled differs from the usual Black Audio approach...

It's a slightly off-the-cuff, home movie way of prying open a certain can of worms of identity. We all know that in contemporary London there are large areas of overlap, large areas of shared assumptions and shared intimacies in terms of both gender and race. With this film we tried to argue that what is now taken for granted as being part and parcel of, say, rap or ragga culture has its roots with people like Michael. I remember an interview with one of Michael's friends, who said, "you know, everything Michael did was excellent drama". By that I think he meant that Michael was able to make connections across otherwise separate episodes. Michael was the conduit through which a number of things passed – I'm not saying these were always good things – and came to embody those things. So there is an interest in black/white relationships in the film, but that interest is also to do with trying to pry open this question of where we are going, what things we together have helped to form.

What made you become a film-maker?

I grew up off the Fulham Road and there was a cinema there called the Paris Pullman which I used to go to regularly. So by the time I was

nineteen I'd seen most of the art house movies of the period – from Antonioni to Tarkovsky, with a few Jack Nicholson all-nighters thrown in. I didn't always understand these films, but at least I'd seen them. I remember too watching Pasolini's *120 Days of Sodom* and having the sense that it had something to do with black issues but not being able to place it.

Like most people in the Black Audio collective, I started off with an interest in questions of representation. That, coupled with an interest in cultural politics, led us to believe, perhaps foolishly, that it was possible to pick up cameras and make films. Of course we found it wasn't that easy. From about 1979 to 1981 we set up cultural groups and performance groups as a way of keeping that interest in representation alive.

I was at college in 1981. We were watching the way the riots were being presented on television and I think that was probably the moment when the two interests in my life came together: film and cultural politics. I remember talking to Eddie George and Trevor Mathison and saying, "we can do this, we have an alternative way of putting things so why don't we just do it?" So we switched our energies from organising events to organising images and sounds.

What we did then was to look for people who could tell us something about how we could say what we wanted to say. We learned a lot more from people who made the making of films apparent – you watch a Godard film and it's made clear to you that you are watching a film because he lays bare the mechanics of the film's construction. You watch the films of Chris Marker, Antonioni or Wenders and it's clear that they are propelled by more than the desire to tell a story. They are asking questions about how you represent *per se* and how you represent excluded subjects.

That was the beginning; independent aspirations and the knowledge I had from the 70s, coupled with new influences: African cinema, Latin American cinema, the films of Charles Burnett, Shirley Clarke, John Cassavetes. I don't think there was ever a film-maker or group that we said we were going to model ourselves on. But there was an itinerary of concerns that we shared with certain film-makers: concerns with ideas, with how you make films politically.

One of the striking aspects of all Black Audio's work is the fusion of music and sound design. In 'Who Needs a Heart' there's a synthesis of a lot of different sorts of music, but also music of a certain period.

Who Needs a Heart is the most collective of our films. It's the one where the different components of the group have worked together to the best of their abilities. I think Trevor's soundtrack is a miracle. I don't know anyone who has done anything similar for a long time. We had a number of ideas about the expressionist potential of music in film, the ability of sound to occupy centre stage without being subordinate to ideas or images. We were convinced sound itself had a gaze, a way of constructing a look, and I think *Who Needs a Heart* is probably the best way we've found so far of substantiating that thesis. I think producers Lina Gopaul and Avril Johnson's ability to make the money

THE STORY OF MICHAEL X

1950: Michael starts his life in Britain as a brothel-keeper. By the mid-50s he is in west London, working for landlord Peter Rachman.

1958: Riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill. Michael becomes a 'spokesperson' for blacks in the area.

1965: Michael meets Malcolm X and changes his name from De Freitas to Michael X (later Abdul Malik). Michael publicly renounces his criminal past. Sets up RAAS (the Racial Awareness and Advancement Society) with Roy Sawh, which became a major force in enabling black people in Britain to stand up for their rights.

1965-67: Michael becomes a media spokesperson on race in Britain, visiting striking black workers. He is feted by pop stars and civil rights activists alike; is befriended by Stokely Carmichael.

1968: A new breed of black radical comes to the fore following the killings of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King; Stokely Carmichael is barred from returning to Britain. Michael is imprisoned under the Race Relations Act for taking Carmichael's place at a meeting in Reading, where he called white people "monkeys and savages". Enoch Powell makes his 'Rivers of Blood' speech.

1969: Michael leaves prison. He starts raising money for a new project in London, the Black House.

The scheme collapses. Press reports of the 'dog collar' incident, involving the sexual humiliation of a white man, further discredit Michael. He goes to Trinidad to set up the Black Liberation Army.

1972: Michael is accused of murder. He flees to Guyana, then attempts to sail to Brazil. He is caught and returned to Trinidad, where he is imprisoned.

Counter-cultural figures lobby for his release.

1975: Michael is hanged for murder in Trinidad.

stretch so far was another miracle. I was very happy with what Eddie and I did with the script, and a little disappointed that we didn't get a chance to film it all.

Recently I was speaking to Indian film-maker and writer Anup Singh and he mentioned that he saw *Who Needs a Heart* as a film permeated with a sense of absence, in that most of what happens to Michael X and the characters you've created in the film takes place when we are not with them. What do you think of this view?

I told the actors we were making a silent film to get them to focus on the before and after action – this suited the new jazz impulses of the film and gave us a chance to deal with the atonal, off-the-beat moments usually discarded in biographical films in the drive for the 'significant'. After that, the rehearsals we had were about defining a tight, almost suffocating, space and then allowing the actors complete freedom within that. The aim was to find a way of privileging nuance and gesture over 'character'. After the shoot, Kwabena Manso, one of the actors, said to me, "We were writing and inventing on film, we weren't acting". That seems to me to sum up what we set out to do.

Aside from the aesthetic questions, there were also ethical and political considerations. The bulk of the research was fired with ambiguity, the unspoken and slippages, and we decided to make the film about this as well. That is by no means the only decision we could have made, but at least it keeps the Michael X file open for others in the future.

'Who Needs a Heart' will be shown at Cannes in May

The love stories in 'Blow-up' are there to enable Antonioni to explore on what basis we make ethical choices – and how we can know and correctly interpret the world, argues Chris Wagstaff

SEXUAL NOISE

● From 1960 onwards, Antonioni's films analysed characters whose world had been put in crisis by some event: the disappearance of a lover, the death of a friend, the end of a love affair, a nervous breakdown – these were the starting points of the tetralogy of *The Adventure* (*L'avventura*, 1959-60), *The Night* (*La notte*, 1960), *The Eclipse* (*L'eclisse*, 1962) and *The Red Desert* (*Il deserto rosso*, 1964) respectively. Antonioni used for his analysis sex. Men and women didn't just make love in his films; love-making was a sign, related to notions of alienation and commitment; it was treated for its meaning, revealing how his characters perceived reality and the ethical choices they made on the basis of that perception.

People tend to think *Blow-up* is a lighter film than Antonioni's previous ones. They think that because it is confusing for the viewer, Antonioni meant it to be ambiguous, and if he meant it to be ambiguous, then he did not mind whether we understood what he was trying to say, or maybe he wasn't clear about what he was trying to say, or maybe the overall meaning of the film was not so terribly important: perhaps its glittering surface was what he



RONALD GRANT

was really offering the viewer. But *Blow-up* is not so different from his previous films; it just goes a little further. It is not a love story, but it is a story about love stories that are not really love stories: Thomas and Veruschka; Thomas and Patricia; Jane and the murder victim; Jane and Thomas; Thomas and his wife; Thomas and the aspiring models; Bill and Patricia. Even in this film, a character's relation to reality and the world is largely coded in cinematic terms by means of sexual representation. The only parts of the film that are not in some way concerned with putative love stories are the scenes relating to the dossers, to the Rag week students, and to the Yardbirds' rock concert, all of which can be shown to have a very precise accessory function, of a basically didactic nature.

Let us challenge many orthodox interpretations of the film, and assert that *Blow-up* is not about illusion and reality. That is a metaphysical question, and Antonioni is concerned with ethics: what is the right thing to do? The only way his characters can know is by accurately perceiving the world they are in, and knowing and understanding themselves. The world must have meaning, which is perceived by

means of a commitment to the concrete reality in front of them. They know and understand themselves by looking back on what they have done, by reinterpreting what their commitment has been to the world in front of them.

That is why three of the films in the tetralogy and *Blow-up* end early on the morning after; it is the morning after when the characters look back and understand where they missed opportunities, and where they failed to engage actively in the reality before them. Thomas' artist friend Bill says about his paintings: "They don't mean anything when I do them – just a mess. Afterwards, I find something to hang on to – like that... like... that leg. And then it sorts itself out. It adds up. It's like finding a clue in a detective story". Antonioni himself, replying to a question about how he came to the idea of the mimed tennis game, said: "You are asking me how ideas come into being. They generally have a very confused history. They pop up all of a sudden, and then gradually become clearer. Just as they do in poetry, I believe: some words come into the poet's mind, and then they sort themselves out and become verses".

The interviewer on this occasion wanted to push Antonioni into an interpretation of his film, that it was about reality and illusion, and Antonioni refused to agree. The question was this: "Reality is therefore just appearances, in the film? *Esse est percipi*? Reality equals appearance, illusion, dream?" Antonioni's reply was: "I wouldn't say that the appearance of reality is equal to reality, because appearances can be many, but I don't know about this, and I don't believe it to be the case. Reality is perhaps a relationship [emphasis added]. But I'm not accustomed to disembowelling the themes of a film from a philosophical point of view; that's not my job".

Blow-up represents the process of perception. We watch Thomas perceive. And we see that it is an ethical relationship with reality that determines his perception. In the tennis match at the end, he is asked to pick up the ball; everybody is looking at him, willing him to do it; he thinks, and decides to do it. He has to put down his camera to do so. If you stand back, and look only on the surface, you will see nothing, ►

Synopsis

Blow-up (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1967)

Rag week students collect money in London, while Thomas, a successful fashion photographer, emerges from a doss-house, dressed in rags, having spent the night there. He gets into his Rolls Royce and drives to his studio, where he goes straight to a session photographing the model Veruschka, in which he enacts a sexual seduction. He photographs a team of five models, whom he treats like dummies, leaving them standing while he visits his neighbours, the painter Bill and his wife Patricia. Bill has an inscrutable recent painting that he hasn't yet deciphered, and which he refuses to sell to Thomas. Patricia is evidently in distress.

Strolling through a park, Thomas starts photographing what he takes to be an amorous couple, getting more and more

interested. The woman, Jane, sees him, and anxiously demands the roll of film, which Thomas refuses. He drives to a restaurant where he shows the doss-house photographs to Ron, who is going to publish a book of Thomas' documentary photographs. He tells Ron that he has just shot some film of lovers, which will make a perfect close to the book.

Back at his studio, Thomas is met at the door by Jane, who has come for the photographs. Thomas stalls her, but when she tries to steal his camera, he gives her a 'fake' roll of film and then proceeds to seduce her. She becomes nervous again after a while and leaves. Thomas is intrigued, and develops the 'real' roll of film he shot in the park. He enlarges some of the shots, and pins them to the wall of his studio. Something strange in the posture of Jane in the photographs leads him to enlarge some shots further, until he discerns a man with a pistol in the bushes,

and realises that he had disturbed a murder plot, in which Jane was enticing her 'suitor' close to a killer's gun. He rings Ron and tells him that he has prevented a murder.

Two young aspiring models ring his doorbell, and he is distracted, humouring them, until eventually all three are frolicking naked on the studio floor. But something in the enlargements on his wall draws his attention again, and he chases away the women, and further enlarges his photographs, until he comes across the body of Jane's suitor lying under a distant tree. He cannot raise Ron on the phone, and goes out to the park, where in the moonlight he sees and touches the body of the dead man. He returns home, but drops into Bill and Patricia's on the way. They are making love, and as he moves to leave, Patricia motions him to stay, and has an orgasm. He goes to his studio, which in the meantime has been ransacked. The

photographs, enlargements and negatives are all gone except for one powerfully enlarged, enormously grainy picture of the distant body. Patricia comes in, and they have a strange conversation about the murder, and about her distress. She says the remaining enlargement looks like one of Bill's pictures.

Thomas goes to a party to find Ron, who is too stoned to respond coherently, and falls asleep. Early the next morning he returns to the park to find the body gone. The Rag week students enter the park and start miming a tennis match, persuading Thomas to retrieve their 'ball' when it goes over the fence around the court. Thomas acquiesces, and mimes the gesture of throwing back the ball. As he watches the game continue, the sound of a tennis ball rises on the soundtrack. The camera backs off Thomas, and as he gets smaller against the grass of the park, his image disappears.

The erotic and the ethical: David Hemmings photographs Veruschka in a frenzy of arousal, opposite; Vanessa Redgrave as Jane, who excites Hemmings' interest – but what's its nature?



◀ just as Thomas sees little of Patricia's suffering, just as he fails to see what Jane is doing, and just as the camera finds when it backs off Thomas at the end of the film, and he disappears. He wants the pictures of Jane to finish off his book tidily.

It is to be a book that will use stark images of human suffering as a contrast to other, softer photographs, and for which Thomas *pretended* to be a dossier. His 'documentation of reality', his book, his neo-realist photographic documentary, was going to be the product of the same nonchalant non-commitment as his fashion photographs, and his portraits of Veruschka. Note that when he photographs Veruschka in a frenzy of erotic arousal, he is photographing only her face in extreme close-up, not the erotic body. It is a real situation, genuinely erotic: he kisses her, she responds – it is not an illusion. It is done to get a certain kind of photograph, and it is of no ethical substance. But the camera is not being used to analyse Veruschka, to put her into a meaningful context in space, or over time.

I am making Antonioni out to be a dull moralist. He isn't. In all his films he combines a playful experimentalism with an exuberant sense of form. For example, Antonioni doesn't accept the wide-screen rectangle for his images. He masks the frame to alter its shape in order to suit what he is photographing. We see this in almost every shot of *Blow-up*, and it is particularly noticeable when he takes a middle-distance shot of a standing person, and masks out the entire screen except for the slim vertical rectangle in which the person is framed. He asserts his right to paint abstractly with the camera in the same way as a painter does. Much of *Blow-up* is built on the rectangle, and plays with almost monochrome superimpositions of rectangles, which are then related to the notion of framing.

But the concern with form is apparent on an even larger scale in *Blow-up*. The film starts and ends early in the morning, with a sort of chorus, the Rag week students. Within that frame, it starts and ends with Veruschka, firstly being photographed, saying that she is going to Paris, and lastly at the pot party, saying that she is in Paris. Within that frame there are at the beginning the five fashion models whom Thomas photographs in his studio, and at the end, the impassive spectators at the rock concert and the fashion dummies in the shop window in front of which he throws down the broken guitar neck, just before he goes to the pot party. Within that frame are the two visits to Bill and Patricia's house, and his two exchanges with Patricia. Within that frame are the two encounters with the aspiring models. Within that frame are the two visits to the antique shop, the two encounters with Jane, and the two sessions of enlargements, each leading to a different re-interpretation of the scene in the park. Directly after the scene in the park, Thomas meets the publisher of his photographic documentary, Ron, in a restaurant, and offers the immediate, uninterpreted version of the park scene as a feature of the book; we and Ron are also shown the photographs that are the product of the night spent at the Camberwell

Reception Centre, with which the film started. After the first re-interpretation of the park scene, Thomas telephones Ron. After the final interpretation, he again sees Ron. Thomas as a fashion photographer, as an artisan, needs no interlocutor but the market. But as artist, as documenter of the real, he needs an interlocutor, his publisher. As man, he has Patricia, and perhaps Jane. In the pale light of the 'morning after' he still survives as artisan and technician, but he has learnt some hard lessons as artist and as man: he has failed to get his publisher interested in reality, and he has rejected Patricia's call for help.

In order to know how you should be acting, you have to know what is the reality that is before you, and in which you have to act. Cinema invites the audience to look at a film and interpret it. Antonioni's films invite us to watch a character looking at reality and interpreting it. The character finds the task difficult, and Antonioni's *point* is that the task is difficult. His main characters are often weak, but that is

ANTONIONI ON BLOW-UP

"'Blow-up' wasn't easy. I was without my usual team (except for the director of photography), subject to timetables, working methods and mentalities completely different from our own, and I was working in a state of continual tension... But I think the year spent in London has been decisive for my work. Shooting abroad, with a foreign troupe, in a foreign language, however tiring it may be, is a useful experience. Your intellectual horizons broaden, you learn to look at the world with other eyes, you are freed from the provincialism, perhaps even from the quietism that here in Italy weighs on you like a cloak, within you there takes place a revolution which, like all revolutions, in the end gives you something that closely resembles freedom".

From *Cinema Nuovo* 186 (1967), p.91; quoted in Aldo Bernardini, *Michelangelo Antonioni: da Gente del Po a Blow-up*, Milan, Edizioni 17, 1967, pp.222-3

"In London, to visit Monica Vitti, during the shooting of 'Modesty Blaise', suddenly I saw the setting that seemed to me to offer an ideal background for my story... I don't intend to shoot in London to show the city as it is today, in its appearance and in its soul. My decision to set the film there derives from the fact that, while it is valid in the absolute sense, that is, wherever it is set, the story, just like the psychology of the characters which give it life, takes on, I maintain, in the world of today's London, a far more intense flavour and breadth".

From *Corriere della Sera*, 14 November 1966; quoted in Aldo Bernardini, *Michelangelo Antonioni: da Gente del Po a Blow-up*, Milan, Edizioni 17, 1967, p.221

"In my previous films I have tried to examine the relations between one individual and another – for the most part their love relationship, the fragility of their emotions and so on. But in this film none of these themes are prominent. Here the relationship is between a single individual and reality – the things that surround him. There are no love-stories in this film, even if we see relationships between men and women. The experience of the protagonist is not sentimental or amorous, but concerns his relationship with the world, with the things he finds before him".

November 1967; quoted in Giorgio Tinazzi, *Michelangelo Antonioni*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1974, p.17

"I like the protagonist, I like the life he leads. When I was preparing the film, I led that life too and I enjoyed myself. It was a pleasant life, but I was only leading it in order to follow the character, not because it was my own".

From Aldo Tassone, *Parla il cinema italiano*, Milan, Il Formichiere, 1979, p.43

because they have difficulty reading the world, and Antonioni knows that it is difficult. So we, the viewers, share in the difficulty of the task of interpretation that Antonioni sets his characters. But what Antonioni is telling us is not necessarily supposed to be difficult for us to understand. We must not transfer the difficulties facing the characters to the task offered the viewer. Antonioni is not trying to make his *message* difficult to understand; on the contrary, he goes to great lengths to make parts of his film very clear. The trouble is, viewers often cannot tell which parts are clear and which are not, and confuse the characters' difficulties with their own.

For example, is Thomas married? In his studio, his telephone rings and he passes the phone to Jane, telling her it is his wife. When Jane refuses the telephone, he tells the caller: "Sorry love, the bird I'm with won't talk to you". He then progressively *reduces* his moral commitment to his wife, to the caller, with the following monologue: "She isn't my wife really. We just have some kids... No. No kids. Not even kids... Sometimes, though, it... it feels as if we had kids... She isn't beautiful, she's... easy to live with... No she isn't. That's why I don't live with her". I don't think Antonioni wants us to doubt the truth of what Thomas is saying. On the contrary, the illustration of Thomas' weak ethical hold on reality and on the nature and purpose of human relationships that this monologue expresses depends on it being a true expression of Thomas' difficulties vis-à-vis his wife, not *ours*.

A notion borrowed from information theory may help to explain how Antonioni's films work. It is the aural metaphor of the ratio of *signal* to *noise* in a communication. If you want to hear a Chopin recital on an AM radio late in the evening, and you find a lot of hisses and whistles partly drowning out the music, you might try turning up the volume of the radio, only to discover that the interference gets so loud that you cannot hear the music at all any more. The Chopin nocturne is the signal that you are after, and the interference is the noise that the channel of communication produces while carrying your signal. If the signal is much louder than the noise, you can turn down your radio to hear the signal at a comfortable level, and the noise is thereby reduced to imperceptibility. It is still there, of course – you can't get rid of it – but the Chopin nocturne completely drowns it out for you.

Let us apply this notion to life. Between men and women there is sexual attraction and desire. Let us call that a noisy channel. On top of that comes a signal of true feeling. But you get at the signal through the noise. How can you tell the signal from the noise? When Thomas photographs Jane, he hears noise: he sees lovers. Jane is a woman, having meaning (especially to a fashion photographer) as an erotic image, not as an initiator of action, least of all as a murderer. She is in a lush green world of nature, which reinforces that image, as does her embrace with her partner. This is all 'noise'. When she rushes at him, he creates more noise: "You know, most girls would pay me to photograph them". He plays a seductive sexual game. Jane says "I'll pay you", and Thomas replies teas-

ingly: "I overcharge". When she tries to grab the camera, he says: "Don't let's spoil everything. We've only just met..." Thomas doesn't want the signal (Jane's aggression and anxiety) to spoil the erotic noise. But Thomas sees it the other way around: he mistakes signal for noise and vice-versa.

When Jane comes to his flat, he carries on trying to interpret as signal what is in fact noise. Jane says: "My private life's already in a mess. It'd be a disaster if..." Thomas replies: "So what? Nothing like a little disaster for sorting things out". Thomas is trying to turn up the volume, and all he is succeeding in doing is increasing the noise to a point where it drowns out the signal altogether – Jane takes off her clothes, kisses him, laughs and starts relaxing. When Jane leaves, his desire motivates him to take a look at the photographs: still thinking that he is involved in an essentially erotic realm. He blows up the photographs, and becomes ethically committed to the reality that they represent, and is persuaded to invert the relationship between signal and noise. But, of course, Antonioni takes it one step further, because the photographic signal is carried by fragments of silver nitrate, which form a noisy channel; as Thomas blows up the photographs, as he turns up the volume to hear the signal louder, the noise drowns out the signal – in this case the noise is the grain of the photographic emulsion. Bill says of his paintings, which are compared to Thomas' final enlargement, that he has to learn to decipher the signal in the noise. At this point, we are reminded of something I have quoted Antonioni as saying: "Reality is perhaps a relationship".

If you think this is fanciful, think again about the scene at the Yardbirds' rock concert. The group are singing an r&b song called 'Stroll On'. They are singing to an audience whose responsiveness mirrors that of the five fashion models at the beginning of the film. While we, the viewers, are supposed to be paying attention to the signal of Thomas searching for Jane, and the audience to the signal of the music, one of the musician's guitars starts producing noise, a crackling. The musician gets angry, and his attempt to quash the noise, by smashing his guitar against his amplifier, becomes the main attraction of the concert; it becomes signal, and in fact, when he throws the neck of his guitar into the crowd, the audience wakes up and responds in a way they had never responded to the music. So signal and noise are represented in a state of permanent reversal. Thomas responds to this new signal by fighting to gain possession of the guitar neck, but when he gets back on the street, he realises that out of context the neck is just noise, and throws it away. The rock concert is not a piece of swinging London, but an illustration of the semiotic structure of what Antonioni is trying to say.

The difficulty of discerning signal from noise is the difficulty that faces the Antonioni character in all his films. The most frequently repeated theme is that of discerning the signal of true human commitment in the noise of sexual attraction. But this is, in its turn, perhaps, a metaphor for the difficulty of perceiving the reality of the world in which we live. The sig-

Antonioni's 'Blow-up' is not a love story, but a story about love stories that are not really love stories



Changing focus: Hemmings tries to enlarge things

nal/noise or figure/ground opposition is what makes choice possible, but it is also what makes that choice difficult. What people see as the ambiguity of Antonioni is better understood as his illustration of that difficulty.

And it is the very first thing he offers us. The credits of a film are usually lettering applied to a background. In the opening credits of *Blow-up*, the lettering contains the image, which consists of shots zooming in and out of some women modelling bikinis on a stage for photographers. We even have the noise of sexuality here. Indeed, the film constantly returns to photography's (and cinematography's) transformation of women into images.

An interesting feature of Antonioni's procedures is this: he does a lot with his camera to make it hard for us to orient ourselves in the scenes that he shows of Thomas' life, and of London. Antonioni had always been famous for long takes. In this film, he fragments his shots, and so fragments our grasp of the pro-filmic world that is being represented. Most viewers never get a sense of the lay-out of Thomas' flat-cum-studio. Antonioni creates this difficulty in order to communicate to us the difficulty of perceiving the real world if you are not ethically committed to it. However, when Thomas starts to get involved, then Antonioni starts filming space and time in a way that gives us a firm grasp of the pro-filmic world. The case of the montage of enlargements has been noticed by a number of critics. It is not a straight montage of still photographs, but is instead a carefully planned sequence of pans and zooms, isolating small parts of enlargements in a progressively didactic way. The interpretation of the world becomes easy both for Thomas and for us as soon as moral commitment is brought to the task.

The search for meaning on the part of a protagonist of Antonioni's is prompted by a crisis. There is no such crisis for Thomas – if anything, his crisis is a product of the search. But the Rag week students replace that function. Rag week is usually Carnival, in England and in Italy. One has to admit that this conflicts with the lush

foliage on the trees, but those are the result of the vagaries of the shooting schedule, and there is no doubt that the people are students (they are art school students in the script), and that the notion of Carnival, where conventional reality is overturned, is central to their representation. The film starts with a visual and sound antiphon between the students and Thomas pretending to be what he is not, a dossier, in order to acquire his representation of reality. It ends with the tennis match on the emblematic morning after.

The whole point of a tennis match is the ball. The game is a test of skill. Whether you get the ball over the net and in the court depends on many factors not directly in your control. When you mime the game, it all comes down to will. In a real game, if you hit the ball into the boundary fence, that is an error; it is noise. In a mime, everything is signal: if the 'ball' goes into the fence, it is because the participants all communally will it there. There is no chance, and therefore no 'noise'. Thomas is willed into the game by the students. The woman in the red stripes points imperiously at him and at the 'ball' that has gone over the fence. As she does so, all the other students are shown leaning away from the fence, applying their will also to Thomas. In a sense, Thomas is for them like a real ball; he is the one element that is not directly under the control of their will. But if his will can be engaged, he too can participate. And he does. As Antonioni says, reality is a relationship. It is not that the game is an illusion, or that all reality is an illusion, but rather that it is will and choice, coming from understanding, that give his characters a reality in which they can act.

To return to information theory for a moment, we could say that a message that is predictable is clearly meaningful, though it may not carry much new information. If I get a Christmas card from my mother, it is clear what is its meaning, but it is an event low in information. But if I get a Christmas card from the governor of Arkansas, the message obviously carries more information, because it is so unpredictable. The trouble is, I wonder which of all the possible meanings was the one intended. The same is true of the end of the tennis match. The sound of the tennis ball that rises on the soundtrack, as we look at Thomas watching the game (the camera unexpectedly stays on his face, and doesn't follow the 'ball') and as we see his eyes almost imperceptibly droop in discouragement, is loaded with so much information that we can have difficulty deciding what is its meaning. In this way, too, Antonioni makes us share the experience of his characters, faced with the enormity of reality, and not knowing which aspects to choose as a basis for action.

● Suggested reading on Antonioni and *Blow-up*: Marsha Kinder, 'Antonioni in Transit' in *Sight and Sound* 36 (1967); Roy Huss (ed), *Focus on Blow-up* (1971); Jurij Lotman, *Semiotics of Cinema* (1976); Ned Rifkin, *Antonioni's Visual Language* (1982); Seymour Chatman, *Antonioni or the surface of the world* (1985); Sam Rhodie, *Antonioni* (1990).

A compassion for faces

In the thirty-five years of my own helter-skelter career, I have always been fascinated by Lindsay Anderson and his creativity. And particularly the paradox of an artist who has survived against the odds.

John Cleese once remarked, "Lindsay Anderson goes too far". What a recommendation! Anderson always went too far. That is the whole point.

The English appreciate their *Monty Python* japes but find it hard to swallow real satire. Lindsay Anderson has always been fired by a search for truth, by an overwhelming, uncompromising vision. At Oxford, in 1947, along with Peter Ericson and Penelope Houston he edited the exacting film magazine *Sequence*. Later Gavin Lambert joined them. They tried for advertisers. "You've about as much chance as snowballs in Hell", remarked an agent. The fundamental conflict never changed. Going out on a limb yet somehow, naively, expecting the establishment to embrace him.

Sam Goldwyn looked at *Sequence*, remarked that it was a fine magazine and handed out advice on how to boost circulation. "Get a pretty girl on the cover. Look at this! Just a horse! Who cares about horses? Get some pretty girls inside... feature a gossip column". Anderson argued that this would mean the end for *Sequence*. "Life is compromise", concluded Goldwyn.

Lindsay Anderson has never been able to compromise. The compulsion to pursue his personal vision and somehow survive in a hostile industry has been the dilemma at the very centre of his career. Thus a true poet of the cinema has been largely ignored. Yet bitterness has never furnished Anderson's creativity.

His love of life and belief in the possibility of change, balanced by his savage loathing for stupidity and pretension, has always been at the root of everything he has created. He has found it impossible to run with the herd. He is an unswerving moralist who never loses sight of the context, constantly juggling opposing forces. His pursuit of truth is obsessive. His vision is as beautiful and as pure as William Blake's.

The other night I had a midnight feast. I went piping down the valley's wild; rediscovering his short and remarkable early films, and I found the man within the artist and a pre-echo of the great work to come. It is in these harsh yet loving landscapes that the artist is seen forging his style.

Wakefield Express (1952), photographed by Walter Lassally, is the story of a small newspaper in a Yorkshire town. The camera gently moves across the everyday lives of its people. They seem light years away from our world. Small town life. Small talk. Small lives. A hilarious, pathetic street procession. A woman stands quietly by a war memorial. Her eyes fill with tears. The children play and sing. There is a feeling of tragic loss. Our loss. Nothing happens. Everything happens. A touching evocation of a lost epoch.

Thursday's Children (1953), which he made in collaboration with his Oxford friend Guy Brenton, concentrates on children who are born without hearing. Nothing seems to happen. These children are also lost in another

world; trapped behind a wall of silence, learning to lip-read. We question the very nature of sound. We are intimately close as the children gradually learn to communicate and we cannot but share their joy at their achievements. Victims become survivors. This quiet concentration within the box of their classroom does more than a plethora of modern journalistic documentaries that fail to touch us any more. We are suffering from overkill. Drought and starvation in Africa. The never-ending dance of death in Northern Ireland. We switch off. But Anderson brings us back to the human family. He concentrates on the specific, illuminates the universal.

O Dreamland (1953) moves a significant step towards narrative art. Again there is a concentration on faces. Hardworking, well lived-in, tired, post-war utility faces. Faces on holiday, spectators at a gargantuan funfair, shuffling through a sort of shoddy purgatory, trying to enjoy an August for the People. But there is a duality in the director's method. He no longer merely points the camera to reveal the subject. His comment is acerbic yet benign. A seemingly impossible duality of contradictions is brought together. Anderson puts us through the hoop, blows the mind. He is hard to live with, but the reward of his truth is worth all the pre-digested crap in the universe. He invests his images with humour, kindness. He shrugs. Sighs. Laughs. This concentration on the lives of the ordinary carries an impact as great and as direct as that of Satyajit Ray. But then comes the twist. The anarchic iconoclast will not allow us to wallow too long. Sudden grotesque effigies are on display in *Dreamland*; wax models trapped in their various kinds of extremis, and the incessant soundtrack of that terrible laughing policeman. The director is discovering his future style.

The White Bus (1967) is Anderson's most memorable film. It was written by Shelagh Delaney and reflects the happenings in her own life, after she returned to Salford having achieved a considerable success with *A Taste of Honey*. There she was vilified. Here the director comes of age, weaves his various threads into one perfect style. Here is the focus for his future work. The genesis for *If...*, *O Lucky Man!* and *Britannia Hospital*. (This *Sporting Life*, an acknowledged masterpiece, stands out on its own, differently.)

The White Bus is a surreal landscape of events. A girl enters a railway station, hurrying for a train. A ridiculous businessman pursues her, gets down on his knees on the platform to serenade her. The indifferent girl is unmoved, moves on, visits a provincial town. Sometimes she sees her past; sees herself hanging, stands with scrubbed girls in a school hall, a singing somnambulist. She joins dignitaries and visitors as they board a white bus to tour factories, offices, the local museum, schools. A woman is scooped off a dead empty street, hijacked by two men, bundled into a ramshackle car. We are puzzled. It seems arbitrary; frightening, as potent as a quiet nightmare; like a De Chirico painting. Sometimes the black and white film claps hands and breaks out into colour. The chutzpah is breathtaking; the contrast emphasising the magic of both forms. The



Opening minds: 'Thursday's Children'



Always travelling: 'The White Bus'



Closing: 'Every Day Except Christmas'



Moving faces: 'The Singing Lesson'



Uses of pleasure: 'O Dreamland'



NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE



FRANK GRIMES

Do not go gentle: Arthur Lowe in the misunderstood 'Britannia Hospital', top left; Richard Harris in 'This Sporting Life', left; Lindsay Anderson, above: "To make a film is to create a world"

images as indelible as the steps of Odessa.

The Singing Lesson (*Raz, dwa, trzy*, 1967) is tender, exhilarating. The close camera searches faces. Always faces. Eyes stare out at you. Locked dreams. Lost passion. Joy. Faces that have seen it all, faces of commitment, hope.

It is in these early films that one can see it all happening. Free cinema seemed about to liberate the film-maker. But it did not. Its impact was stifled. *Every Day Except Christmas* (1957) won the Grand Prix at Venice but there was an attempt by the British Film-makers Association to stop the film being shown. They said it gave a very poor view of British life. The same thing happened to *If...* at Cannes. The British government representative was seen chattering with rage, "Disgusting that such a film should be shown". This cold-shouldering by the English establishment found a mirror image in the English film establishment. Why did it take thirty years for *Every Day Except Christmas* to reach our television screens? Why was *Britannia Hospital* received with such vituperative venom.

I watched *Britannia Hospital* both then and now. Then it seemed hilarious and far-fetched. Now it seems terrifying, foreboding. Time has caught up with Lindsay Anderson. And his neglect is significant. There is an ambiguity in his work that people find hard to stomach. The English have become armoured against feeling. Anderson's refusal to compromise is emphasised by an inflexible vision: a determined, unflinching scrutiny that makes us feel uncomfortable. The media likes pigeonholes. But Anderson refuses to be categorised.

I believe it was Adrian Turner of the NFT who remarked to him: "I must admit I do not like your films". Lindsay's obsession with social themes has always been expressed through poetic eyes. This fusing confuses. The establishment wants him to be an Angry Young Man for the rest of his life. We desire our geniuses to be dead or at a safe distance. Foreign-born geniuses are best. John Cleese can probably stomach Fellini, Cocteau, Buñuel and Bergman. I would put Anderson in their company.

This is the age of compromise. We have lost sight of truth, beauty and excellence. Decorative Merchant Ivory reign supreme. The meretricious *Silence of the Lambs* receives acclamation. We have been fed on a diet of pap for so long that we have lost our appetite for truth. And in this climate we have crowned our best film-maker with indifference. He once wrote about himself in the *Observer* apropos the shooting of *If...*: "Your demands are impossible, but how can they be less? To make a film is to create a world".

My long night's viewing helped me to understand Anderson's other great obsession; his unremitting love for John Ford and Humphrey Jennings, who also have a deep compassion for the human face, for the beauty of ordinariness, a love of mankind and a hatred of humbug. Pursuing truth is a lonely game, but I suspect Anderson could take no other path.

I also suspect that in the end our world will catch up with him, and he will have the last laugh. That sardonic embracing laugh that has seen it all. And preserved it for us.

BOOKS

In a man's world

Elizabeth Wilson

The Dilys Powell Film Reader

Christopher Cook (ed), Carcanet, £25, 453pp

The C. A. Lejeune Film Reader

Anthony Lejeune (ed), Carcanet, £25, 365pp

Movie Love:

Complete Reviews 1988-1991

Pauline Kael, Marion Boyars, £12.95, 348pp

Looking for Trouble:

On Shopping, Gender and the Cinema

Suzanne Moore, Serpent's Tail, £10.99, 310pp

What is it that accounts for women's pre-eminence as film critics? Do women make better film critics than men? Are there more of them?

I haven't counted, but I believe the answer to the last question is "No", and certainly Anthony Lejeune in *The C. A. Lejeune Film Reader*, recalling press showings he attended in the 40s with his mother, presents a roll call of male names which includes only one other woman – Dilys Powell. Yet these women's work has endured, and in the early post-war years in Britain, Powell and Lejeune reigned over film criticism from their positions on the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* respectively. As Christopher Cook points out in his excellent introduction to *The Dilys Powell Film Reader*, this may have been by chance, or it may have been because film criticism was not taken seriously and therefore women were allowed to do it.

Whatever the reason, these doyennes are not a purely British phenomenon, since Pauline Kael was – and is – famous on both sides of the Atlantic for her witty and trenchant reviews in the *New Yorker*. All three writers, unlike Suzanne Moore, hail from a period before the advent of structuralism, semiotics and *Screen* theory, but this does not mean that their work is theoretically uninformed. In Dilys Powell's case, clear, if implicit, theoretical positions structure her judgments. Cook suggests that she adopted an auteur approach long before the arrival of auteur theory. She brings a set of elegant cultural assumptions to her writing, treating film as an art on a par with literature, theatre and painting.

Today, politically correct sophisticates may deem elitist her ideas about fully achieved creative works, but what Powell herself describes as her "moral" approach to cinema – essentially a liberal humanist position – is eminently civilised and sane (for instance, her objections to gratuitous screen violence). Powell's reviews display the strengths of liberal humanism: clarity, perspicacity and an attention to the individual. Time and again she puts her finger brilliantly on the special quality of a film, an actor or a director: "It seems that Eisenstein himself has been moving more and more towards the analysis of the individual... but aesthetically the most remarkable thing is [his] attempt to orchestrate the cinema: to create a film in which the visual image, and the spoken word, and the music, are interwoven, so that each plays its part as if it were an instrument in an orchestral score. *Ivan the Terrible* is probably the most intellectual film we've ever had, for this very rea-



A moral approach to cinema:
Dilys Powell



Consistent and unsentimental:
C. A. Lejeune



Cutting through the crap:
Pauline Kael



Acerbic commentator on the 80s:
Suzanne Moore

son. It's the very antithesis of romantic cinema: it has the precision, the calculated movement, of classical drama."

The C. A. Lejeune Film Reader comes over as more of a period piece. As film criticism, the articles have not retained their relevance. Yet C. A. Lejeune writes beautifully, and through her work the lost world of the 40s and 50s lives again. I was reminded of women novelists of that period, like Betty Miller and Elizabeth Taylor, and of their celluloid manifestation, Celia Johnson. Here was a generation of middle-class women, perhaps too conservative and blinkered by gentility for our tastes, but they had their own integrity and their judgment was clear, guided by a set of standards which were consistent and unsentimental.

I began to wish that C. A. Lejeune had written novels herself. Her writing grips when she discusses *Gone With the Wind* in the context of wartime London, or when she celebrates Ealing comedy. She has a gift for brilliant *bons mots* and one-line characterisations: Kay Hammond, turned green to act a ghost in *Blithe Spirit*, looks like "an animated acid drop"; while of Margaret Rutherford she says: "What a woman she is for hugging a grotesque part to her bosom, and giving it back again with warmth and generosity". For these sparkling insights, Lejeune can be forgiven for dismissing *The Third Man* as "a brilliant trick" and for not realising that *The Girl Can't Help It* sends itself up.

Pauline Kael provides a link between these past mistresses and the more recent work of Suzanne Moore, writing about many of the same films as Moore. She shares with her fellow female critics a simplicity and directness of approach, and like Moore she is at her best when cutting through the crap, especially male crap. Her dissection of Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*, her perception of its sentimentality and child-ishness, are scalpel-sharp; on the other hand, she makes you want to see – instantly – the films she praises. Cinema as popular culture is in her blood, and therefore she's less overtly concerned than Powell to see it as the inheritor of the great western legacies of the novel and theatre. She seems wholly in tune with contemporary movies – for example, absolutely seeing the point of Almodóvar, and sharing Moore's love of that director.

Yet in one way, Kael has more in common with Powell and Lejeune than with Moore. Of these four writers, only Suzanne Moore connects film to wider social issues. Of course Kael comments on the relationship of *Born on the Fourth of July* to the Vietnam war; of course she understands the social implications of *Patty Hearst*. But Moore uses film as a springboard for an exploratory and acerbic commentary on the social and aesthetic world of the 80s in general. She is readier – in true post-modern fashion – to make links between different popular culture texts.

Not content with a critique of *The Silence of the Lambs*, for instance, she discerns in its cannibalistic villain a trend found also in *Twin Peaks* and in fashionable novels like Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*. She is not impressed by the fact that at least one of the authors is a woman: "Helen Zahavi's radical feminist/radical revenge novel, *Dirty Weekend*, in which the much put upon Bella spends a couple of days killing men, is to be made into a film by that well-known radical



feminist director Michael (Death Wish) Winner. The novel, endorsed by Andrea Dworkin and Julie Burchill, was described in the *Observer* as 'more offensive than pornography'. Here there is a conscious, though lightly worn, engagement with film theory, post-modernism and feminist debates, and her contempt for feminists who believe that writing about murder is fine if the perpetrator is a woman is all the sharper for being implied rather than spelt out.

Yet overall the similarities between these writers outweigh the differences to a surprising degree. It's the freshness and lack of pretension that enchant. Though it is invidious to assign a particular set of characteristics to writers (or any other men and women) on the basis of their sex, there are observable differences between these female commentators and some male critics. Barry Norman and John Naughton (prize-winning television critic of the *Observer*) are

often admirably iconoclastic, but they can also be heavy-handed, unnecessarily taking the thickly populated moral highground on controversial issues. At such times, they put themselves centre stage instead of the movies or the programme.

When Powell *et al* adopt a moral stance, they do so without drawing attention to themselves, discussing the issues rather than striking attitudes. With Mrs Thatcher in mind, it's difficult to argue that there is anything inherently female about this. Nevertheless, these four books will delight anyone interested in the importance of retaining a sense of proportion and balance; who values wit and a light touch, understanding that this may clothe a criticism as serious as any swathed in ten-letter words; and who believes that although all films are texts, there is a place for allowing that some are better than others, and that the reason for going to the movies is to enjoy.

"Probably the most intellectual film we've ever had": Dilys Powell on Eisenstein's 'Ivan the Terrible'

Body work

Jill McGreal

Cronenberg on Cronenberg

Chris Rodley (ed), Faber and Faber, £12.99, 197pp

The first three directors covered in this excellent series – Martin Scorsese, Paul Schrader and David Cronenberg – have much in common. Each of them obsessively reworks recurrent themes, sustained by an underlying romanticism. All three are influenced by European art cinema, and point to the formative influence of Fellini, Antonioni, Bergman, Bresson, Rossellini *et al*. And the avant-garde has also had an impact on their work – names like Warhol, Snow and Anger continually crop up.

Using the same format as the Scorsese on Scorsese volume, Chris Rodley has distilled the content of a number of interviews with Cronenberg going back several years and has re-presented them as a chronological history punctuated only by his editor's explanatory introductions and notes. This structure provides an entertaining narrative and allows Cronenberg's thoughts to roam over diverse subjects. Sometimes, though, the absence of an interviewer's interjections enables the director to glide through troubled waters a little too easily. For instance, feminist criticism of the sado-masochistic theme of *Videodrome* or the female sexual predators of *Shivers* and *Rabid* is summarily dismissed as a reactionary desire for censorship, while other more sophisticated feminist arguments about Cronenberg's explicit use of visceral and sexual imagery are not addressed at all.

It has often been pointed out (see, for instance, Mike O'Pray in *Sight and Sound* March 1992) that Cronenberg's films feature 'weak' men and 'strong' women characters. But the real issue is the absence of *central* roles for women in Cronenberg movies (or, for that matter, in movies by Scorsese). The so-called 'strength' of the female characters is presented from a male perspective which is highly problematic for many women. This is a Cronenbergian feint which Rodley's editing smoothes over.

Remarkably, for the man who invented the VD-transmitting parasites of *Shivers*, the armpit phallus of *Rabid* and the hi-tech hell of the porno conspiracy in *Videodrome*, Cronenberg maintains a strict and dispassionate balance towards most things, reserving his anger for lawyers and censors (whom he likens to psychotics in their inability to distinguish between illusion and reality). Cronenberg teasingly ascribes this temperamental paradox to his Canadian nationality. He has not yet made a movie outside Canada, and one of the book's fascinations is its insights into how Cronenberg's films manage to get made outside Hollywood, with the help – and hindrance – of tax shelter laws, point systems and public subsidy.

The major achievement of *Cronenberg on Cronenberg* is to take seriously a film-maker who has been vilified as a schlock horror director. Cronenberg's thematic preoccupations surface forcefully when he discusses Cartesian dualism, middle-class America, avant-garde film and literary influences on his work like William Burroughs and Vladimir Nabokov.

Cronenberg may not be an intelle- ►

◀ tual like Schrader, nor a cinephile like Scorsese, but it's clear that his understanding of and commitment to his personal project are strong. In this light, Scorsese's ill-judged remark that Cronenberg doesn't understand his own films seems extraordinary. It's interesting to know that he turned down *Top Gun*, *Flashdance* and *Witness*, and that it took a year before it became clear that his idea of how to deal with the themes of memory, identity and madness in *Total Recall* would never coincide with the scriptwriter's version of 'Raiders of the Lost Ark Go to Mars'.

Cronenberg on Cronenberg succeeds because of its basically simple idea of what makes interesting and intelligent reading about film – a mix of anecdote, production information and the odd piece of titillating movie gossip from the horse's mouth, all packaged as an autobiographical filmography (and hopefully forthcoming titles will include some women directors).

Watch out for the spoof foreword and ignore the poor quality of the stills, but above all – go see the movies.

Owning the image

Paul Hirst

Contested Culture:

The Image, the Voice, and the Law

Jane M. Gaines, BFI Publishing, £14.95, 340pp

Jane Gaines begins this fascinating volume with the words: "In this book, Melville Nimmer meets Bernard Edelman". Nimmer was a hard-boiled lawyer and author of the standard treatise on US copyright law. A former attorney for Paramount Pictures, he was one of those who developed trademark law as a form of property protection for the US entertainment industry. Bernard Edelman is a French legal theorist and commentator, whose pathbreaking book *The Ownership of the Image* (*La Droit saisi par la photographie*) is an analysis of copyright law as it relates to photography and cinema. Edelman is also a Marxist theorist, strongly influenced by Louis Althusser, and one of the few analysts of law in terms of ideology to raise that activity above the level of leaden dullness and class name-calling.

Jane Gaines manages this strange meeting very well. On the one hand, she goes a long way towards putting Edelman's work back on the agenda for specialists in film and television studies. As she says, it was neglected after it appeared, not least because law was perceived as a marginal way of approaching these media. She convincingly demonstrates that it is not, and her case studies offer a valuable insight into the commercial imperatives driving our media culture. On the other hand, she takes the cases and materials offered by Nimmer and others and explores several of them in depth. Law cases can appear dreary, but, like Edelman before her, Gaines manages to make them both intellectually enlightening and part of an entertaining comedy of manners.

For example, in *Onassis versus Dior* (1984), Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis sued Dior for appropriation of her image. Dior's advertising agency had placed ads in a number of upmarket magazines showing a wedding with a Jackie Onassis look-alike as part of



the trendy crowd of guests. Dior defended on the grounds that the look-alike, Barbara Reynolds, was who she was and had a right to her own image – granting relief to Onassis would be tantamount to denying Reynolds the right to be photographed and to commercial exploitation of herself. Dior lost, the judge concluding that the issue was not Reynolds' photograph but its use as a "representation" of Jackie Onassis. As Gaines says, people who question post-structuralist theories of representation should read media law.

In *Lugosi versus Universal Pictures, Inc* (1979), law not only imitates, but doubles art. Both plaintiffs and defendants squabbled over the very much alive commercial property of the image of the dead actor as the embodiment of Count Dracula. Bela Lugosi's relatives, disturbed by the exploitation of his image on T-shirts, argued that the dead man had rights in this case to control publicity under privacy law. The legal arguments swung back and forth for nearly two decades before being decided for Universal on the grounds that privacy rights die with their bearer.

DC Comics, Inc versus Powers (1978) presents the spectacle of the owners of the trademark rights to Superman challenging the right of an actual newspaper in Miami called *The Daily Planet* to use the name. The hippy paper copied the imaginary title only to find the legal rights advanced by DC Comics (who had bought out the creators of Superman for a song) were more real than their journal. Under trademark law, DC Comics had only to prove that the title, which they had not registered as a trademark, had featured in previous licensing contracts they had issued for Superman. In a later case, the trademark holders were able to prevent Richard J. Daley College, Illinois, from using the title *The Daley Planet* for its school newspaper because of the obvious connotations, despite the difference in wording.

Such use of trademark legislation and rights would, if unchecked, ultimately become oppressive and eat up the public domain, turning language into private property. Fortunately, as Gaines shows, some restraint has been put on this process. A subsequent case decided that DC Comics has no monopoly on heroes who fly through the air. All this is good news, really, because if there were only a few basic plots and some very clever lawyers, then a small number of corporations could acquire prop-

erty rights to the entire world of fiction – novels and movies. Trademark law creates the possibility of a perverse kind of magic, a real *Neverending Story* in which Karl Marx joins forces with Vladimir Propp and all imagination is frozen in the safes of a few corporate law firms.

For art's sake

B. Ruby Rich

Illuminating Video:

An Essential Guide to Video Art

Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (eds), Aperture/Robert Hale, £14.95, 566pp

Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art is a new anthology whose grandiose title just asks for trouble. Since the trouble is characteristic – and, indeed, illuminating – it deserves attention. To be sure, the inscription "video art" announces a certain orthodoxy of intent, yet the lip service paid in the contributions to excluded voices forms an internal auto-critique that reveals a certain editorial awareness and points to the book that might have been. There are two fault lines for critical examination: the artists who are represented and the histories of video which are presented.

From the beginning video has been an artist-driven field. Without the profit margins, gallery clout or museum authority of the art world, video has always been more self-determining in its values and missions. Without the genre expectations, industry influences, semi-theatrical network, and academic interests enjoyed (or endured) by film, video has turned inward to its own practitioners to set its course, enshrine its pantheons and predict its future. The fetishisation of the artist remains unchecked in a field that badly needs stronger curating, tougher criticism and a broader theoretical foundation.

This volume is representative: artists outnumber curator/critics about two to one among the contributors; the table of contents lists "artists' pages" in bold (with all others in regular type); the foreword by David Ross (Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art) asserts that "the artist's word has been the clearest and most powerful component of video's critical corpus". Which artists, though, what words, and in the service of whose corpus?

Editors Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer argue that their volume "does not purport to be a definitive history of the field... that no single history can (or should) be written and that to understand video one must consider its several origins as well as its diverging agendas, both social and aesthetic. Multiplicity is one of video's strengths and the source of much of its power". OK, let's see. There is no shortage of names that would fit comfortably into any museum's video-art exhibition: Gary Hill, Dara Birnbaum, Peter d'Agostino, Mary Lucifer, Bill Viola *et al*, all writing more or less about their own work and its influences. Dan Graham and Howard Fried in particular stand out for their unashamed self-aggrandisement, even quoting their own (positive) reviews. Other kinds of video producers are relegated to the status of merely being written about. The hierarchy is obvious.

Fortunately, pieces by Martha Gever, Coco Fusco, Christine Tambllyn and a hand-

ful of others trace the descendants of alternative traditions and offer solid evidence of work dedicated to oppositional values. Some of it is ensconced in museums and some not, some hammered out of public access facilities and others out of university departments or community resources, much of it low-tech-produced with new Video 8 and Hi-8 cameras, edited off-line down and dirty or dressed up in its final stages, reaching out to different audiences and attuned to different priorities. They mention established video artists like Joan Braderman, Shu-Lea Cheang, Vanalyne Green, Victor Masayesva. But there are still omissions. The likes of Julie Gustafson, Sadie Benning, Steve Fagin, Testing the Limits, Diva TV or the Scribe video centre, to name just a few important video-makers that come to mind, do not even rate a mention in the index (which, by the way, is organised as a particularly valuable bibliography and videography, making their absence even graver). The restriction of the volume to US production (despite the all-embracing title and the inexplicable inclusion of a lengthy piece by French critic Raymond Belour) only highlights the problem.

Anyone interested in knowing more of this sector need only consult the distribution catalogues of the Video Data Bank, Third World Newsreel, Women Make Movies, or the National Asian-American Telecommunications Association (NAATA). These works are neither obscure nor unutilised. So why are so many of them excluded from this volume?

The key is to be found in the "Histories" section, where Martha Rosler convincingly deconstructs the sacred history of video, complete with an alternative reading of the Nam June Paik creation myth and a useful debunking of the notion that the avant-garde is an inherently oppositional force. Marita Sturken examines the enterprise of archaeology itself, noting the video field's compulsion to trace its own (brief) history over and over, fixing the cause as technological uncertainty along with a "fear about survival". In fact, this obsession with its own history reflects the deep current of paranoia that runs through the field, the inevitable product of an incestuous insularity that too often turns back on itself.

Martha Gever employs entirely contemporary terms, drawn from outside the discipline, to create a context for much feminist video of the past decade. Dee Dee Halleck, Judith Barry and Deirdre Boyle offer similarly heretical histories which posit a different creation myth that starts with collectives instead of individuals - Videofreex, TVTV, Radio Free America, Antfarm - and traces right up to modern-day efforts like Deep Dish or Paper Tiger TV an impulse that Halleck terms "the 60s dreams of a wired future". Such a framework, of course, will yield a distinctly different mode of viewing, producing and assessing video.

The irony of *Illuminating Video*, finally, is its time-warped quality. For the most part, its editors have enshrined the world of video art that dominated the field ten years ago. In so doing, they seem to be engaged in a desperate battle to return to a period when the video world was smaller, the technology more expensive, the access more limited, the club more exclusive - back when 'grass-roots' was still *passé*, 'feminism' still referred mostly to film and 'multiculturalism'

was not yet a phrase on anyone's lips. The tokenistic inclusion of Coco Fusco as the only critic of colour leaves her with the unenviable task of encompassing an impossibly wide spectrum of artists. Meanwhile, the Bill Viola essay, "Video Black - The Mortality of the Image" repeatedly employs the metaphor of blackness as though a phrase like "the black of the annihilation of the self" were unproblematic in 1992. By excluding so much work - by women, makers of colour, gay and lesbian producers - *Illuminating Video* succeeds in marginalising itself from the most vital and productive discourses - and artists - of the 90s.

Another look

Sheila Whitaker

Arab and African Film-making

Lizbeth Malkmus and Roy Armes, Zed Books, £15.95, 264pp

Given the dearth of material on Third World film-making, any publication on the subject is welcome. It is no accident that this one comes from Zed Books, who since they were established here some years ago have contributed to filling the gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the three continents.

Books on the African cinemas are inevitably hampered by the films' lack of general distribution. The success of such volumes in attracting new audiences is a crucial part of fostering both distribution prospects and film-making itself. The interdependence of the activities of viewing and criticism, which is vital to any film culture, takes on even greater significance when it comes to the Third World, since a Eurocentric stance can seriously damage the reception of indigenous cinemas both within and outside their own countries. This problem is in evidence here. A general historical introduction is followed by analyses of Arab and African film-making by Malkmus and Armes respectively. Malkmus breaks down Arab cinema by genre (epic, comedy and drama) and form, with chapters on scene, sound and sign. Her studies of genre are too heavily reliant on western literary concepts (those of Northrop Frye in particular), while there is no substantive attempt to distinguish between the production, historical, cultural, social and political contexts of Egypt and the other Arab countries.

The result is that the Hollywood-style production process found in Egypt, which has produced a large proportion of the films of North Africa, is unproblematically set alongside the wholly different conditions prevailing elsewhere. Malkmus' discussion of the hero, for example, takes little account of such differences, and she treats Arab cinema by and large as a homogeneous entity, with certain regional thematic preoccupations (the Algerian war of independence is the obvious one). Add to this the absence of discussion of, for example, Islam, and one is left not only with an incomplete concept of Arab cinema, but with insufficient idea of how to approach it on its own terms.

By contrast, Roy Armes' study of African film-making largely avoids this trap. The volume of material he has to cover is limited (indeed, as Paulin Soumanou Vieyra has stated in his article "African cinema: solidarity and difference" in *Questions of Third*

Cinema, the situation remains "on the level of African films rather than African cinema"), but he draws on important work by theorists from the Third World in order to elucidate the cultural and creative frameworks of individual films and to facilitate understanding of them. His contribution provides an accessible introduction to the critical tools with which 'ordinary' viewers can approach these works, and also arouses the desire to see the films. Overall, however, the book leaves the reader frustrated. At this important historical moment for the African continent and its cinemas, sadly, this is an opportunity lost.

Making the mickey

Janet Abrams

Disney's Art of Animation:

From Mickey Mouse to Beauty and the Beast Bob Thomas, Hyperion/Little Brown and Co, £25, 208pp

The Art of Mickey Mouse

Craig Yoe and Janet Morra-Yoe (eds), Hyperion/Little Brown and Co, £25, 124pp

The appearance of these two books just before the opening of Euro Disneyland is not uncoincidental. Both published by the Hyperion Press (Hyperion Avenue being the address of the first Disney Studio in Los Angeles), they are part of the Disney Company's ongoing merchandising operation - a global enterprise that has ensured Mickey Mouse the iconic status of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis, or JFK. As such, the two volumes are marked by the tone of saccharine enthusiasm which seems to be mandatory for 'authorised versions'.

Disney's Art of Animation, authored by Disney's official biographer Bob Thomas, offers a chirrupy up-tempo history which hops in sentence-long paragraphs through the early history of Disney animation, skips merrily through the feature films (gliding dexterously across commercial failures and labour unrest) and finally jumps to the latest computer-assisted success - *Beauty and the Beast*. Illustrated throughout with sketches, ▶

Mickey Mouse and the ears that inspired a thousand artists



◀ final coloured frames and archive photographs. *Disney's Art of Animation* somehow manages to be visually saturating rather than informative – a function of the book's pedestrian layout and, for this reader, the cloying quality of the Disney cartoon aesthetic.

In Book One, chapters with titles such as "A Mouse is Born" and "Preparing for Greatness" outline the inexorable course of Walt Disney's commercial and aesthetic development. Technological improvements such as the multiplane camera and the advent of colour are mentioned, and passing reference only is made to key support players such as Dutch animator Ub Iwerks, who followed Disney from Kansas City to Hollywood and was responsible for drawing most of the early Mickey Mouse cartoons.

With the success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the company expanded in the late 30s to over 1000 employees. When the new studio opened in 1939, on a 51 acre lot in Burbank (where Michael Eisner now presides from a headquarters building graced with Seven Dwarf caryatids), Walt was surprised that the animators didn't appreciate his would-be workers' paradise. Discontent over salaries and conditions eventually led to a strike in 1941 and, after government arbitration, unionisation of the studio. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Disney studio was requisitioned as an army supply depot and Walt went into training films. Alas, no stills are provided from such memorable Disney movies as *Four Methods of Flush Riveting* (for nearby Lockheed Aircraft Corp) or *Victory Through Air Power*.

Thomas' delicate shading of the story-behind-the-stories allows the commercial flops – *Bambi*, *Fantasia* and *Pinocchio* – to be acknowledged with scarcely any change in tone from the exuberance accorded the great successes. When it came to adapting literary classics, qualities that made the original stories enduring often became obstacles to successful animation. Sir John Tenniel's illustrations for *Alice in Wonderland* were found to be "too intricate" and the story to lack narrative logic. *Alice* turned into a Disney disaster.

Book Two is devoted to a department-by-department case study of the recently released *Beauty and the Beast*. In this section, staff mugshots and mono stills from live-action videos (used as the basis for character

movement) further complicate the stew of visual styles. The emphasis on verbal description rather than annotated and sequenced images makes it difficult to follow the various stages of the animation process. One is forced to criss-cross between body text and picture captions, many of them extended biographies of production staff. This attempt to give credit to individuals subsumed under the Disney corporate banner becomes mawkish, even patronising.

The Art of Mickey Mouse is a scarcely disguised coffee-table book, and best kept shut, since the cover illustration – one of several Andy Warhol images based on the eponymous rodent – is far superior to most of those within. A collection of mostly commissioned images, it has the garish showcase feel of an Illustration Annual, with Mickey Mouse as the theme for renderings in ink, airbrush, photo-montage, or even chopped-up vegetables.

One or two contributions genuinely break the mould: Willem de Boer's photographs of a house with ear-shaped apertures and of a parking meter's double-headed silhouette raise a smile after wading through neo-Cubist, neo-Futurist, neo-Tintin and neo-Arthur Rackham versions on preceding pages. Keith Haring and Andy Warhol both used Mickey as a recurrent theme in their work, and get several entries; the replication involved in the animation process meets its artistic equivalent in Warhol's multiples, while Haring seems to have successfully incorporated Disney's icon into his own panoply of archetypes (a show organised by the Phoenix Art Museum, exploring Haring's hero worship of Warhol and Disney, is currently touring the US).

The opening essay by long-time Disney enthusiast John Updike contains the insight that Mickey's ears are always shown as round, whichever angle he's seen from. Hence the shock of his 'real life' Doppelgänger at Disneyland, where the ears may be seen in forbidden profile. Far more disturbing, however, is the drawing by Michael Jackson a few pages after the prologue, with Mickey's smiling head emerging from the rock star's leather jacket. This crude blue biro doodle (aptly entitled "Bad") suggests that Jackson may have to undergo yet more cosmetic surgery before he's satisfied that his own physiognomy will be as lasting, and artificial, as that of Disney's durable mouse.

Shorts

Nightmare of Ecstasy:

The Life and Art of Edward D. Wood, Jr

Rudolph Grey, Feral House/Turnaround, £9.99, 231pp

● A biography of transvestite pulp writer and B-movie-maker Ed Wood Jr, probably best known as the star, scriptwriter and director of *Glen or Glenda* (1953). Grey has pieced together an oral history of Wood's life from close friends and family, and also includes a chronology, a bibliography of Wood's novels and stories and a filmography which also covers his numerous unrealised projects.

Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts

Russell Leong (ed), University of Washington Press, \$19.95, 287pp

● A collection of essays by film-makers, media artists and writers on the history of Asian American media culture from 1970 to 1990. The volume includes an interview with Wayne Wang and contributions from Gregg Araki (*The Living End*), Trinh T. Minh-ha (*Shoot for the Contents*) and video artists Art Nomura and Valerie Soe. Leong's introduction describes the book as "a beginning handbook to reclaiming memory and the future".

Zapata: The Little Tiger

John Steinbeck, Heinemann, £16.99, 251pp

● Steinbeck's script for Elia Kazan's 1952 *Viva Zapata!*, published with an introduction in five chapters by the writer tracing the historical background to the film's events and protagonists. Steinbeck, who was closely involved in the production, offers comments and advice on the making of the movie – deferring ultimately, though, to Kazan as director.

Anatole Dauman: Pictures of a Producer

Jacques Gerber, translated by Paul Willemen, BFI Publishing, £30, 203pp

● Elegantly written memoirs of the producer of such celebrated art movies as *Hiroshima, mon amour*, *Empire of the Senses* and *Paris, Texas*, prefaced with an introduction by Elia Kazan. Letters, script extracts, contracts, budgets, on-set photographs and production stills document in fascinating detail the film-making process.

New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics:

Structuralism, Post-structuralism and Beyond

Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, Routledge, £12.99, 239pp

● First of a new series mapping major conceptual areas in cinema studies, intended to provide clear and accessible analyses of current debates and issues for further research. This volume lays out the advances made by film semiotics, covering semiology, narratology, psychoanalysis and the text, and includes an extensive bibliography and useful index of terms.

Supernatural Spielberg

Darren Slade and Nigel Watson, Valis Books, £6.99, 135pp

● An enthusiastic account of the role of the supernatural in Spielberg's work, including analytical readings of the television movie *Something Evil*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, 1941, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, *Poltergeist* and *Always*. The authors devote considerable space to rescuing *E.T.* from negative criticism, arguing that it crystallises the director's complex vision of suburbia and elucidates his overall world view. The book also provides a detailed filmography, with full credits for all of Spielberg's television and film projects.

Stars in their eyes:
Disney's recent Oscar-winner
'Beauty and the Beast'





Republic of Images A History of French Filmmaking

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Basic Instinct

USA 1992

Director: Paul Verhoeven

Certificate

18
Distributor
Guild
Production Companies
Carolco/Studio Canal +
Executive Producer
Mario Kassar
Producer
Alan Marshall

Associate Producers

William S. Beasley
Louis D'Esposito
Unit Supervisor
Clifford Roseman
Production
Co-ordinators
LA:

Christine A. Johnston
2nd Unit:
Joan Wellman

Unit Production

Manager
William S. Beasley

Location Managers

San Francisco:
Ellen Winchell
Additional:
Amanda Lawford
Gail Stempfer
Susan Griffin

2nd Unit:

Laurie Noll

Post-production

Supervisor

Michael R. Sloan

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Noori Dehnahi

2nd Unit Director

M. James Arnett

Casting

Howard Feuer

Extras:

Cenex Casting

San Francisco:

Judith Bouley

ADR Voice:

Charing Cross Sound

Assistant Directors

Louis D'Esposito

Nina Kostroff

Michael Viglietta

2nd Unit:

Eric Jewett

Annie Spiegelman

Screenplay

Joe Eszterhas

Director of Photography

Jan De Bont

Panavision

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Photography

Michael Ferris

Aerial Photography

Stan McClain

Camera Operators

LA:

Michael Scott

2nd Unit:

Kim Marks

Steadicam Operator

Larry McConkey

Video Playback Operator

Brad Ralston

Special Visual Effects

Rob Bottin

Crew:

Fernando Favila

Henry Alvarez

James Clark

Gunner Ferdinandsen

Art Pimentel

Margaret Prentice

Vincent Prentice

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Music Editor

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Music Co-ordinator

Robin Glenn

Songs

"Movin' On Up" by Jeff

Barry, Janet DuBois;

"Rave the Rhythm"

by VanLierop, Khan,

Adams, performed

by Chanel X; "Glowing

in the Ashes" by Ken

Liebenson, performed

by Doo Wah Riders;

"Blue" by and

performed by LaTour;

"Looking for the

Summer" by and

performed by

Chris Rea

Choreography

Bill Landrum

Jacqui Landrum

Costume Design

Ellen Mirojnick

Costume Supervisor

Michael Dennison

Women:

Deborah Hopper

Men's Costumers

Anthony Scarano

San Francisco:

Michael Becker

Make-up Artists

David Craig Forrest

Body:

Laura DeAtley

2nd Unit:

Catherine Childers

Special Make-up Effects

Rob Bottin

Title Design

Wayne Fitzgerald

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Cruse & Co

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Club Music:

Tom Hayden

Suzanne Hayden

Production Assistants

Set LA:

Nancy E. Cox

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LA:

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Kate Levine

Key Set San Francisco:

Catherine M.

McDonald

Set San Francisco:

Richard Brodsky

Robin Allen

San Francisco:

Bernard Dethiers

Heide Foley

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John Fordham

Catherine Isakson

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Stunts

Seth Arnett

Janeen Best

Rocky Capella

Steve Chambers

Mike DeLuna

Justin DeRosa

Gary Epper

John Epstein

Marian Green

Tom Huff

Maria Kelly

Janet Orcutt

Randy Peters

Manny Perry

Stunt Doubles

Michael Douglas:

Michael Runyard

Sharon Stone:

Donna Evans

Sandy Berumen

Leilani Sarelle:

Janet Brady

Helicopter Pilots

Robert "Bobby Z"

Zajonc

Alan Purwin

Cast

Michael Douglas

Detective Nick Curran

Sharon Stone

Catherine Tramell

George Dzundza

Gus

Jeanne Tripplehorn

Dr Beth Garner

Denis Arndt

Lieutenant Walker

Leilani Sarelle

Roxy

Bruce A. Young

Andrews

Chelcie Ross

Captain Talcott

Dorothy Malone

Hazel Dobkins

Wayne Knight

John Correlli

Daniel Von Bargaen

Lieutenant Nilsen

Stephen Tobolowsky

Dr Lamott

Benjamin Mouton

Harrigan

Jack McGee

Sheriff

Bill Cable

Johnny Boz

Stephen Rowe

Mitch Pileggi

Internal Affairs

Investigators

Mary Pat Gleason



Hormone victim: Michael Douglas, Sharon Stone

opened out with several swooping filmed car chases, a deal too much loving travelogue footage of out-of-the-way San Francisco, more costume and location changes than are entirely credible, and bursts of violence and sexual activity far in excess of anything seen in Britain since the passage of the Video Recordings Act.

Stripped of all its super-lush trimmings, *Basic Instinct* would seem to fit most comfortably into that direct-to-video genre, the 'erotic thriller' – loosely inaugurated by *Fatal Attraction*, from which Michael Douglas has been recalled to play yet another victim of his own hormones – in which made-to-order *femmes fatales* seduce B-quality leading men into murky violent mysteries peppered with extensive saxophone-scored sex scenes. From the mystery point of view, the film also suffers somewhat from Eszterhas' track record, in that this is the fourth movie (after *Jagged Edge*, *Betrayed* and *Music Box*) in which the protagonist compromises professionalism by bending the rules for someone he or she loves, only to learn that those to whom they are closest are guilty of appalling crimes.

Finally, despite a series of unsettling sequences (the repetition of dialogue between Catherine's interrogation after Johnny's murder and Nick's interrogation after Nilsen's is especially unnerving), and the strong ensemble sequences full of snappy patter, the film falls down simply because its three-million-dollar script is just a gimmick, an unfeeling house of cards which falls apart when the loopholes and logical flaws that sustain the ambiguous resolution come to light. For instance, if Catherine is the murderer, then it is unclear whether her ultimate victim was intended to be Beth or Nick. The film's focus on the latter nominates him for the role, even though the villainess must have put her far-reaching scheme into effect long before she, or Beth, were aware of his existence.

To return to the original controversy, it seems unfair to target the film for its almost incidental depiction of a bisexual psychopath, and (in Dorothy Malone's cameo red-herring character) a lesbian child murderer, when it far more blatantly associates heterosexual urges and activity with ultra-violence and dementia.

Kim Newman

Bis ans Ende der Welt (Until the End of the World)

Germany/France/Australia 1991

Director: Wim Wenders

Certificate

15

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Companies

Road Movies

Filmproduktion

(Berlin)/

Argos Films (Paris)/

Village Roadshow

Pictures(Sydney)

Producers

Jonathan Taplin

Anatole Dauman

Portugal:

Paulo Branco

Co-producer

Wim Wenders

Line Producers

Marc Monnet

Australia:

Su Armstrong

Associate Producer

Julia Overton

Production Controller

Alex Matcham

Production

Co-ordinators

Ghislaine Caue

Catherine Coste

Germany:

Uwe Kossmann

USA:

Maxine Garcia

Japan:

Michiyo Hayashi

Anne Akemi Kaneko

Australia:

Maggie Lake

Unit Production

Managers

Germany:

Barbara von Wrangell

USA:

Karen McCabe

Production Managers

Italy:

Rosanna Roditi

France:

Ginette Mejinsky

Claude Albouze

Portugal:

Alexandra Barradas

Japan:

Yoshio Tan

Kunio Niwa

Mitsuko Oki

2nd Unit:

Michael Schwarz

Unit Managers

Italy:

Guido Cerasuolo

France:

Olivier Thaan

Australia:

Richard Carroll

2nd Unit:

Karsten Brunig

Location Managers

France:

Arnaud Dupont

Frederic Doniguan

Portugal:

Camilo Castelano

Branco

Germany:

Bories Keidies

USA:

Laurie Noll

Japan:

Takao Sugiyama

Australia:

Robin Clifton

2nd Unit:

Jorg Grossman

Post-production

Supervisor

Barbara von

Weierhausen

2nd Unit Director

Daphne Paris

Casting

Italy:

Daniela Foa

Extras France:

Luc Etienne

Portugal:

José Maria Vaz da Silva

USA:

Davia Nelson

Extras Australia:

Judith Cruden

Assistant Directors

Marc Jany

Thierry Verrier

Scott Kirby

Italy:

Alessandro Bressanello

France:

Christine Fauconnot

Portugal:

Manuel Joao Aguiar

Germany

Pre-production:

Gabriele Mattner

Japan:

Masaharu Komsatsuki

Takeshi Miyasaka

Takuya Seki

Australia:

Tony Mahood

Emma Schofield

John Martin

Screenplay

Peter Carey

Wim Wenders

Based on an original

idea by

Wim Wenders

Solveig Dommartin

Director of Photography

Robby Müller

Colour

Eastman Colour

2nd Unit Camera

Benedict Neuenfels

France Additional:

Theo Bierkens

Additional Camera

Joel Peterson

Video

High Definition

Designer:

Sean Naughton

Manager:

Michael Condon

2nd Unit Camera:

Hito Steyerl

Graphic Transfers:

Muriel Abadie

Bernard Vissiere

2nd Unit Supervision:

Dieter Klucke

"Bibo" Peter Tabbert

Kevin Jensen

On/Off Line Production

Manager:

Roman Gustke

Special Visual Effects

FuturEffects

Supervisor:

Frank Schlegel

Production Supervisor:

Morten McAdams

Optical Printing

Stefan Finkenzeller

Matte Artists

Hubert von Seidlein

Leigh Took

Rotoscope Artist

Rino Gouw

Computer

Graphic Imagery

Denys Chomel

Melanie Hildenbrand

NHK High Vision Unit

Producers:

Yoshinobu Numano

Katsufumi Nakamura

Technical Director:

Shuhei Masui

Technical Supervisors:

Hideichi Tamegaya

Yutaka Shimizu

Assistant Director:

Takuya Seki

Editor:

Yuji Yoshizawa

Computer Graphics:

Shigeru Suzuki

Camera:

Shigeyoshi Okumura

Light Graphics:

Suma Tsuchiya

Editor

Peter Przygodna

Production Designers

Thierry Flamand

Australia:

Sally Campbell

Art Directors

Italy:

Claudio Carer

Germany:

Jan Schlubach

Alfred Hirschmeier

USA:

Steve Burns

Japan:

Mitsuo Murayama

Australia:

Ian Gracie

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Bret Lama

Set Decorators

Portugal:

Maria José Branco

USA:

Hildy Burns

Japan:

Akira Ishige

Set Dresser

Jimmy Vanstennkiste

Illustrators

France: Gilles Guerber

Dominique Gelli

Pascal Payeur

Australia: Mike Worrall

Scenic Artists

Peter Collias

Gus Lobb

Electronic

Special Effects

Loupi

Futuristic Objects

Thierry Flamand

Space Lab Design

Albrecht Konrad

Models

Simon Weisse

Christian Jutte

Australia:

Mike Worrall

Tim Ferrier

Music

Graeme Revell

Music Extract

"The Tao of Solo Cello"

performed by

David Darling

Solo Cello/Additional

Improvisation Music

Performed by

David Darling

Music Supervisors

Gary Goetzman

Sharon Boyle

Music Co-ordinators

Barklie K. Griggs

Jennifer Quin

Richardson

Dana K. Sano

Music Editors

Peter Przygodna

Synch:

Dick Bernstein

Songs

"Sax & Violins" by

David Byrne, Chris

Frantz, Jerry Harrison,

Tina Weymouth,

performed by Talking

Heads; "Summer

Kisses, Winter Tears"

by Jack Lloyd, Ben

Weissman, Fred Wise,

performed by (1) Elvis

Presley, (2) Julee

Cruise; "Move with

Me" by Neneh Cherry,

Cameron Mcvey,

performed by Neneh

Cherry; "It Takes Time"

by and performed by



In another's footsteps: Solveig Dommartin

◀ ing bank robbers, Chico and Raymond. They persuade Claire to take the stolen money to Paris for them, and en route she gives a lift to Trevor McPhee, who is being tailed by Burt, a bounty hunter. Back in Paris, Claire returns to her ex-lover Eugene and discovers that Trevor has stolen some of the bank money. When she spots Burt on the Paris metro, she follows him; eavesdropping on his phone call to Winter, a private detective, she obtains Trevor's address in Berlin.

When he gives her the slip, Claire goes to Winter who, with the aid of a computer, traces Trevor to Lisbon and discovers that a large reward is being offered in Australia for his capture. Winter accompanies Claire to Lisbon, but when she falls in love with Trevor (who is having trouble with his eyes), she helps him to lose Winter. Trevor then goes off without her; Winter locates him in Moscow, and he and Claire are unexpectedly joined there by Eugene. It turns out that Trevor's real name is Sam Farber, and an American organisation is offering an even larger reward for his capture. Sensing danger, Winter gives up the search, but Claire follows Sam to Beijing.

Back in Paris, Eugene, who now also has a people-search computer, tells Claire that Sam is in Tokyo, where they agree to meet. In their hotel, she stumbles across Winter and then finds Sam who is now virtually blind. They travel to a remote Japanese village, where Sam regains his sight under the care of a herbmaster, and explains to Claire that, as part of a US government research programme, his father invented a camera that can enable blind people to see. Fearful of the camera's potential, his parents went into hiding in the Australian outback. Sam has been travelling the world filming his relatives for the benefit of his blind mother, but the strain of using the camera has caused temporary blindness. Claire helps Sam by filming his sister in San Francisco, but when Chico turns up they head for Australia, where they meet Eugene and Winter.

Sam and Claire fly off to Sam's parents and Eugene, Winter and Chico follow by van. When the US government explodes the malfunctioning satellite, all computerised equipment is rendered useless and Claire and Sam are

forced to land. They continue their journey on foot and meet up with Winter, Eugene and Chico. They all believe that the explosion has caused the end of the world. At the Aboriginal settlement where Sam's parents, Henry and Edith, are in hiding, they succeed in transmitting the images filmed with the new camera to Edith's brain.

When Chico picks up a radio programme, they realise that the world has not come to an end and they celebrate the dawn of the year 2000. Edith dies, Winter and Chico leave, and Henry starts an experiment to record people's dreams. Although the Aborigines want no part in such a project, Sam and Claire participate and are drawn into their own private dream worlds. Eugene takes Claire away and brings her back to reality by getting her to read a book he has written about their adventures. Henry is taken back to the US where he dies, and Sam is brought back to sanity by the Aborigines. Eugene publishes his book and Claire goes to work on a space station monitoring pollution.

● Like *Paris, Texas*, Wenders' latest offering has the nuclear family at its centre, but this time it is used to reassert humanist values in the face of rapidly advancing technology. Crossing four continents, the film is also "the ultimate road movie", to use Wenders' own expression, not to mention a semi-futuristic, light-hearted global thriller. As might be expected, it is also laden (to the point of excess) with cinematic references ranging from Yasujiro Ozu to the *Mad Max* movies. Add to this a sub-text of sexual and racial politics, High Definition Video and a specially commissioned score, and one has some idea of the bewildering proportions of *Until the End of the World*.

On one level, the film is an exploration of a life style increasingly shaped by communications and information technology. While cultural differences are clearly delineated (often to the point of reinforcing racial stereotypes), central to the film is the idea that, with networked computer systems, satellite, and international travel, we now live in a global space. This means that Claire, Sam, et al. not only jetset around the world at the drop of a hat, but paradoxically they

are also easier to find. As they cross borders, use credit cards, or make travel arrangements, they can easily be traced with the help of user-friendly computer programmes. The film also pokes fun at our obsession with image-based technology. Eugene, for instance, has to rediscover the typewriter when a nuclear explosion renders his computer useless; Henry's camera may give Edith the gift of sight, yet it deprives Sam of his.

Against all this, the film seems to posit the nuclear family as a source of hope. For example, what at first appears to be a case of large-scale industrial espionage turns out to be just a son trying to help his blind mother. Suddenly we are catapulted into a world where the (white, heterosexual, middle-class) family is the motivating force of life, but this is also where the film starts to break down: what began as a critique of modern technology turns abruptly into full-blown melodrama. Not only is Sam devoted to his mother, he also desperately wants to win his father's approval. Sam lost his wife and child searching for his parents after they went into hiding; Edith has been blind since the age of eight, was a refugee from Nazi Germany, and the shock of seeing again traumatises her to the point of losing her will to live.

Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with moving from global thriller to melodrama/tragedy, but here the personal elements are so overdetermined as tragic that it is impossible to take them seriously. This may be intentional, but the relationship between Sam and Claire (played by Wenders' companion Solveig Dommartin, who also played the trapeze artist in *Wings of Desire*) tends to undermine such a sympathetic view. Sam is a man with a mission and a sense of place in the world, while Claire is rootless and directionless and only finds a place through Sam. Her principal role in the film is to follow in Sam's footsteps with dogged, sickeningly masochistic devotion.

In fact, Wenders demonstrates a certain naivety about questions of representation in general, with the treatment of the Aboriginal community reinforcing the usual representations of such cultures as 'other'. This section of the film also undermines the earlier critique of technological innovation by falling into the trap of utilising technology for its own sake (long dream sequences produced by processing images on High Definition Video are not really crucial to the narrative).

It is understandable that Wenders should want his work to become more accessible, but he is unlikely to achieve that with this over-ambitious film. In addition to the audiences who will be alienated by the questionable representation of women and non-white cultures, *Until the End of the World* ultimately comes across as heavy-handed, chaotic and immensely cluttered, finally leaving one with an overwhelming sense of bewilderment.

Julia Knight

Dream On

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Amber Films

Certificate

15

Distributor

Amber Films

Production Company

Amber Films

In association with

Channel 4/British

Screen/Northern Arts

Production Team

Kitty Fitzgerald

Rich Grassick

Ellin Hare

Sirkka-L. Kontinen

Murray Martin

Pat McCarthy

Lorna Powell

Peter Roberts

In colour

Opticals

Les Latimer

Design

Judy Tomlinson

Music

Graham Raine

Bridgette Enever

Kisha

Songs

"I Will Survive"

by Perren, Faxarss,

performed by Maureen

Harold, Sharon

Richardson; "That's

What Love Will Do"

by Peacock, performed

by Joe Brown; "Like

I've Never Been Gone"

by Paul Hampton, C.

Hampton, performed

by Billy Fury; "Have I

the Right" by Howard

Blakley, performed by

The Honeycombs; "Girl

Don't Come" by Chris

Andrews, performed by

Sandie Shaw; "You've

Got Your Troubles, I've

Got Mine" by Roger

Cook, Roger

Greenaway, performed

by The Fortunes

Sound

Elaine Drainville

Dave Eadington

Sound Re-recorder

Colin Martin

Production Assistants

Jane Neatrou

Anne Robson

Lynn Silmon

Stunt Co-ordinator

Denise Ryan

Cast

Maureen Harold

Rita

Amber Styles

Kathy

Anna-Maria Gascoigne

Julie

Pat Leavy

Peggy

Ray Stubbs

Larry

Brian Hogg

Sharky

Derek Walmsley

Baz

Art Davies

Bert

Niall Tobin

Spirit

Wayne Buck

Colin

Mike Christie

DHSS Officer/Singer

Libby Davison

Julie's Friend

Gwen Doran

Gwen

Steve Drayton

Pork Man

Mike Elliott

Security Man

Charlie Hardwick

Sharon

Harry Herring

Senior Citizen

Cilla Mason

Julie's Supervisor

George Bouny

Gillian Conroy

Maggie Gee

Tony Mason

Arthur Urquhart

DHSS Claimants

Stan Gee

DHSS Security

Alan Fox

Policeman

Joan Bell

Eileen Gallagher

Ann Graham

Wendy Williamson

Darts Home Team

The Catholic Club

The Robin Hood

The Ballarat

Darts Away Teams

Darren Bell

Kevin Buck

Shaun Gallagher

Vicky Higgins

Stephanie Higgins

Amy McKie

James McKie

Peter Mortimer

Dylan Mortimer

Nancy Peters

Raymond Reynolds

Tilly

10,801 feet

120 minutes

● In a contemporary working-class community in North Shields, the New Clarendon pub is the focus of social life and the venue for a ladies' darts team. Bert, the landlord, hides Kathy from her drunken, violent boyfriend Sharky, but is dismayed when his strong-willed Irish mother, Peggy, turns up on a motorbike and announces that she is going to stay for a while. Kathy's best friend, Rita, a secret drinker, gets ready for a night at the pub while her husband Larry, a security guard, talks to his fish and her son, Colin, escapes through his bedroom window to sniff glue with his mates. Kathy's daughter Julie tells her husband, Baz, to clear out when he discov-

ers her on an anorexic eating binge.

At the pub, Peggy starts to put things to rights with her semi-sorceress powers of divination and magic, aided by her leprechaun-like imaginary partner. Rita slips slowly into alcoholism but Larry refuses to discuss anything with her. Kathy leaves Sharky but returns to him when he swears that he will never hit her again. Julie struggles to squeeze her ample self into a size ten and is unable to eat anything.

Bert resents his mother's interference in his business, but Peggy tells him that he must think more about human feelings than money. Sensing danger, Peggy averts Rita's suicide and divines that the glue-sniffing Colin is hurt. Rita visits him in hospital and they talk about their addictions. Julie is saved from anorexic breakdown when she is finally able to reveal to Kathy how her father abused her sexually as a child. Larry finds a stash of empty sherry bottles behind the bath and Rita admits that they are hers. Kathy decides that she cannot take Sharky's violent behaviour any longer, and both she and Rita sleep in the pub overnight, much to the displeasure of the sour Bert.

Rita decides to return to a career as a singer and Kathy decides once and for all to leave Sharky, who has been following her with a knife. Julie has allowed Baz to read her 'diary', which details the years of abuse she suffered as a child, and they begin to be reconciled. At the local seaside palais, Rita is joined on stage by Larry, Kathy and Julie for a rousing version of the Gloria Gaynor song "I will Survive". Peggy, her work done, leaves on her motorbike with her imaginary friend, and Bert experiences a momentary regret.

● *Dream On* was made by the Amber co-operative under the ACTT workshop agreement, in association with Channel 4, British Screen and Northern Arts. It has been described as a 'magical realist' film which offers an account of relationships in the 90s, of how individuals and families in crisis cope. This 'programmatically' description actually does it less than justice; it is a warm, affecting, local film which will give much pleasure to the North Shields community which has been so faithfully represented.

There are Scottish, Irish and Geordie accents and a rich mix of local dialect, expressions and slang which would defy understanding by English-speaking communities outside the UK. It is precisely this kind of non-mainstream, national cinema which, in necessary and important ways, carries on a British tradition begun with the Griersonian documentary movement in the 30s. The 'magical' side is well-handled, mainly through three dream sequences - Rita's, Kathy's and especially Julie's - and through episodic off-the-wall moments, as when pantomime chickens and horses perform mundane tasks like using a service till. At the centre of the 'magic' is Peggy, whose supernatural prowess really consists of an intuitive understanding of people and their lives.

To be more specific, she has a woman's intuition, and this is the crux of the film - it's about women and their ability to identify, confront and resolve emotional and interpersonal problems. The price that women pay for being so blessed is the subject perhaps of another film or a different review. *Dream On* doesn't belabour the point - it's lightly treated through comedy and some genuinely moving scenes, as when Julie reveals her years of sexual abuse to her mother. The men are the main butt of the jokes, especially the morose Larry whose lack of communication has an element of farce (the weary, sozzled Rita eventually feeds his beloved fish the contents of her sherry glass and plays the theme music from *Jaws* directly into the tank).

Larry will never be reconstructed, but there's hope at the end of the film that he might just listen once in a while. Sharky's violence will never leave him, and there's a hint that while women like Kathy are prepared to take beating after beating from a string of different men, there is as little hope for him as there is for her. This is not a sentimental film about women, nor one which puts them in traditional male situations (like *Thelma & Louise*) to make them strong. If the men are portrayed as irrational, uncomprehending, self-centred or bitter, the women are muddled, dependent and hysterical - but ultimately they are the key to change.

Jill McGreal

Europa

Denmark 1991

Director: Lars von Trier

Certificate

15

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

Nordisk Films

In association with

the Swedish Film

Institute/the Danish

Film Institute/

Eurimages

Executive Producers

Gerard Mital

Gunnar Obel

Patrick Godeau

François Duplat

Producers

Peter Aalbaek Jensen

Bo Christensen

Production Supervisors

Lars Kolvig

Philippe Guez

Production Co-ordinators

Dominique Dedise

Dominique Szpindel

Brigitte Hald

Underwater:

Peter Davey

Fran Valentine

Production Managers

Lene Nielsen

2nd Unit:

Thomas Heinessen

Poland:

Wieslawa Borecka

Location Supervising Producers

Ryszard Straszewski

Beleslaw Michalek

2nd Unit Director

Tomas Gislason

Extras Casting

Annette Grunnet

Bo Bendtsen

Assistant Directors

Tom Hedegaard

Elizabeth Frey Harne

Egon Haase

Poland:

Janusz Petelski

Elzbieta Sikorska

Syed Ali Hander Rizvi

Screenplay

Lars von Trier

Niels Vørsel

Tomas Gislason

Directors of Photography

Henning Bendtsen

Jean-Paul Meurisse

Edward Klosinsky

Scope

In colour

Underwater Photography

Mike Valentine

Camera Operator

Jacek Stachlewski

Special Optical Effects

Jan-Erik Sandberg

Mattie Artist

Finn Skovgaard

Editor

Herve Schneid

Production Designer

Henning Babs

Art Director

Anarzej Borecki

Storyboard Artist

Finn Skovgaard

Special Effects

Dansk Special Effekt

Service

Music

Joakim Holbek

Additional Orchestration

Kim Helweg

Music Co-ordinators

Kjeld Wennick

Claes Cornelius

Songs

"Main Theme"

performed by Nina

Hagen, Philippe

Huttenlocher; "Europa

Aria" by Lars von Trier;

"Vertigo Prelude

Variation" by Bernard

Herrmann; "Take the

A Train" by Billy

Strayhorn

Dancing Supervisor

Britt Bendixen

Costume Design

Manon Rasmussen

Wardrobe

Ole Kofoed

Malou Listoft

Poland:

Malgorzata Zdulecny

Make-up Artists

Key:

Isabelle De Arallio

Poland:

Jolanta Pruszyńska

Special Effects Make-up

Morten Jacobsen

Sound Design

Per Streit Jensen

Sound Editor

Thomas Krag

Sound Recordists

Pierre Excoffier

Location:

Elzbieta Hetman

Michal Zarebski

Music:

Peter Brander

Foley Recordist/

Sound Effects

Nalle

Dolby stereo

Foley

Julien Naudin

Consultants

German Dialogue:

Heike Löffler

English Dialogue:

Christine Martin

Casting:

Romain Bremont

Joyce Galle

Risa Kes

Historical:

Karl Christian

Lammers

Production Assistants

Lisbert Matz

Isabelle Arca

Monica Steenberg

Poland:

Ewa Borek

Jozef Jarosz

Borek Borowicz

Zdzislaw Saulk

Marek Sienkiewicz

Narrator

Max von Sydow

Cast

Jean-Marc Barr

Leopold Kessler

Barbara Sukowa

Katharina Hartmann

Udo Kier

Lawrence Hartmann

Ernst-Hugo Järegård

Uncle Kessler

Erik Mork

Pater

Jorgen Reenberg

Max Hartmann

Henning Jensen

Siggy

Eddie Constantine

Colonel Harris

Benny Poulsen

Steleman

Erno Müller

Seifert

Dietrich Kuhlbrodt

Inspector

Michael Phillip Simpson

Robins

Holger Perfort

Mr Ravenstein

Anne Werner Thomsen

Mrs Ravenstein

Hardy Rafn

Man in Housecoat

Cecilia Holbek Trier

Maid

Janos Hersko

Jewish Man

Talila

Jewish Wife

Claus Flygare

Father

Jon Ledin

American Soldier

Barnd Owe

Man with Papers

Leif Magnusson

Dr Magnus

Lars von Trier

Jew

Vera Gebuhr

Depot Assistant

Else Petersen

Old Female Assistant

Ben Zimet

Thadde Lokinski

Old Men

Peter Haugstrup

Piccolo

10,269 feet

114 minutes

English version

● Germany, 1945. As the war ends, Leopold Kessler, a young American of German parentage, arrives to do what he can to help rebuild the shattered country. His uncle has fixed up a job for him as a trainee sleeping-car conductor with the railway company Zentropa; after a probationary three months, his suitability for the post will be assessed. Leo makes the acquaintance of one of the passengers, Katharina, daughter of Zentropa's owner, Max Hartmann, which soon leads to an invitation to dinner with the Hartmanns. There Leo meets Katharina's cynical brother Larry and a sinister American 'guest', Colonel Harris, reluctantly befriended by Hartmann in order to protect Zentropa's future.

Harris hopes to recruit Leo in the struggle with the 'Werewolves', the Nazi partisans who are continuing a campaign of sabotage and assassination against the Allies. Unwilling to get involved, Leo remains a spectator to the social turmoil during his train journeys. The German passengers travel fearfully, harassed by the Allies' callous enforcement of restrictions and penalties; sometimes their destinations prove to be towns that no longer exist. Invited again to Katharina's home, Leo sees Hartmann being persuaded by Harris to sign an anti-Nazi declaration, while a Jewish 'informant' is brought in to confirm that Max is his friend and protector - although they have never met before.

Katharina takes Leo to see her father's vast model railway and confesses that once she too had been a 'Werewolf' but has now broken with the Nazi sympathisers. She and Leo make love while, in a bathroom below, the humiliated Hartmann slashes himself with a razor and dies in an overflowing bathtub. Resuming his duties, Leo is approached by Larry to bring the train to an unscheduled halt at Darmstadt, where Hartmann's coffin can be unloaded for a proper burial that has been banned by the authorities. Leo does so, but the ceremony is interrupted by soldiers and the coffin is confiscated.

Katharina tells Leo that he should return to America, but the attraction between them is too strong and a month later they are married. On the same day that he is to be assessed by railway inspectors, Leo is told that he must blow up the train in order to disrupt the main line to Bremen; Katharina is kidnapped by the partisans to ensure his compliance. Confused by his assessors and uncertain of his alle-



Blessed: Anna-Maria Gascoigne, Amber Styles

giances, Leo first sets a time bomb, then defuses it. Only when he realises that he has been betrayed by everybody, Katharina included, does he set off the charge. The train plummets into a river where, trapped in the wreckage, Leo is drowned.

● Lars von Trier's trilogy, co-written with Niels Vørsel, began with the flamboyant thriller *The Element of Crime* (1984); a second section, *Epidemic*, was a Cannes competitor in 1987 but has so far failed to reach the UK. The third film, *Europa*, has one obvious link with the earlier work in its portrayal of a disaster zone where nobody can be trusted, but in all other respects seems to raise quite separate issues by taking us firmly back to the time and territory of Rosellini's *Germany, Year Zero* (or more suitably, given von Trier's evident allegiances, of Reed's *The Third Man*).

This grim location, where the American forces act not as liberators but as devious and manipulative invaders, is offered as a symbol of today's (or tomorrow's) Europe. The Danish director's version of Allied purposes in 1945 may indeed have the intention of stirring up some mischievous hostility for its own sake – and for that, perhaps, of a European film industry. But either from reconsidered diplomacy, or because von Trier is unconvinced by his own prejudices, it fails to ram the message home. On the contrary, his characters – whether German or American or both – are alike of two minds and two worlds, eager to reconstruct yet afflicted with a passion for ruin.

If *Element of Crime* was steeped in Welles and Tarkovsky, *Europa* seems more Bergman and Dreyer (Henning Bendtsen was also the cinematographer for *Ordet* and *Gertrud*), enhanced by such icons as Barbara Sukowa to remind us of Fassbinder and von Trotta, and Eddie Constantine to remind us of the prison-state called *Alphaville* and of a wealth of American influences. Presiding over this chaos are the magisterial, unmistakable accents of Max von Sydow, who lays claim to our attention like a music-hall mesmerist from the opening shots ("On the count of ten, you will be in Europa").

Given, at the same time, that *Europa* is a story of multiple deceptions, of causes compulsively betrayed, it seems perverse of von Trier to unleash most of his contempt on those who remain undecided. His theme appears to be that it doesn't matter which side of the fence you're on so long as you're not on the fence itself, a vantage point (a collapsing bridge, in this case) from which his vacillating hero finally plunges to his death. While something of a floating voter himself, von Trier is at least a dedicated entertainer, converting the super-wide format of his screen to its own neutral zone on which monochrome and colour compete for supremacy. Disinclined to anything less than grand opera in his images, von Trier is an engagingly inventive hypnotist who has yet to justify his urgent claims on our attention.

Philip Strick

Europa, Europa

France/Germany, 1991

Director: Agnieszka Holland

Certificate

15
Distributor
Arrow Films

Production Companies

Les Films
du Losange (Paris)/
Filmkunst (Berlin)

Executive Producers

Lew Rywin
Janusz Morgenstern

Producers

Artur Brauner
Margaret Ménégoz

Associate Producer

Barbara Pec-Slesicka

Production

Marek Skladanowski
Robert Lipinski

Teresa Maleszewska

Mariusz Stepień

Ireneusz Kaznocha

Jarosław Pogorzelski

Halina Malek

Czesława Łukasiewicz

Magdalena Kurowicka

Iwona Pajdosz

Sammy Brauner

Sylvie Richez

Amira Chemakhi

Philippe Tuin

Casting

Margot Capelier
Marie-Christine Lafosse

Sarah Thomsen

Screenplay

Agnieszka Holland
Based on the memoirs
of Salomon Perel

Director of Photography

Jacek Petrycki
In colour

Editors

Ewa Smal
Isabelle Lorente

Art Director

Alan Starski

Set Design

Laco Adamik

Special Effects

Jacek Jelinski

Music

Zbigniew Preisner

Music Director

Zdzisław Szostak

Music Performed by

Polish Radio and
Television Orchestra

Music Editor

Małgorzata Jaworska

Costume Design

Wiesława Starska

Małgorzata Stefaniak

Military Costumes

Jan Rutkiewicz

Make-up Artists

Ewa Symko-
Marczewska

Grażyna Kula

Sound Editors

Elisabeth Mondy

Małgorzata Jaworska

Sound Recordist

Stanisław Hojden

Historical Consultants

Michał Friedman

Tomasz Szarota

Cast

Salomon Perel

Old Salomon Perel

Marco Hofschneider

Young Salomon Perel

René Hofschneider

Isaak

Piotr Kozłowski

David

Klaus Abramowski

Father

Michele Gleizer

Mother

Marla Sandrowicz

Berta

Nathalie Schmidt

Basia

Delphine Forest

Inna

Andrzej Mastalerz

Zenek

Włodzimierz Press

Saline's Son

Martin Maria Blau

Ulmayer

Klaus Kowatsch

Schulz

Holger Kunkel

Kramer

Bernhard Howe

Feldwebel

André Wilms

Robert

Hanns Zischler

Captain

Anna Seniuk

Rosemarie

Jörg Schnass

Banführer

Norbert Schwarz

Schwabe

Eric Schwarz

Goethke

Ashley Wanninger

Gerd

Julie Delpy

Leni

Halina Labonarska

Leni's Mother

Wolfgang Bathke

Police Officer

Aleksy Awdziejew

Russian Major

Artur Barcis

Aleksander Bednarsz

Zbigniew Bielski

Marcin Bielawski

Marek Brand

Arkadiusz Brukner

Dariusz Buchowiecki

Bohdan Ejmont

Alfred Fremdenheim

Jarosław Cajewski

Jarosław Gruda

Kama Kowalewska

Herman Larcher

Marcin Latalo

Gienadij Lesniewski

Nicolas Lormeau

Alexi Maslov

Michel Malko

Cezary Morawski

Maxime Mardoukhaev

Włodzimierz Musiał

Ryszard Pietruski

Hanna Sylberg

Bogusława Schubert

Tadeusz Wojtych

Człoz Wons

Stanisław Zatlaka

10,044 feet

112 minutes

Subtitles

● Germany, 1938. On the eve of his bar mitzvah, the home of thirteen-year-old Salomon Perel is raided by the Nazis. Salomon escapes and hides, returning in a borrowed Nazi coat to find the house ransacked and his sister killed. The Perels move to Lodz in Poland, but with the outbreak

of war Salomon and his brother Isaak are sent east. They are separated crossing a river; Salomon is rescued from the water by a Russian soldier and taken to a Soviet orphanage in Grodno to be trained as a Komsomol member.

When Germany invades the Soviet Union, Salomon is accidentally left behind in the exodus from the school. Captured by the Nazis, he is able to persuade them that he is a German, Josef Peters, despite being denounced by Zenek, a fervent young Pole from the school, who is then accidentally run over. Known affectionately as "Jupp", Salomon is taken on by a Wehrmacht regiment, but his true identity is discovered by Robert, a homosexual lieutenant who makes a pass at him and sees that he is circumcised.

Robert befriends him and keeps his secret, but is killed in a skirmish along with other members of their regiment. Salomon attempts to rendezvous with the attacking Russians, but meets them just as they are surrendering, and is acclaimed as a hero by the Germans. His captain proposes to adopt him as a son, and he is sent to an élite Hitler Youth camp, escorted by a female officer who is proud to seduce such a fine example of German youth. In the academy, Salomon passes muster as a "pure Nordic type", but is terrified at the thought that his circumcision might give him away. He begins a romance with Leni, a devout Hitlerian cadet, but cannot risk making love with her; angered by his rebuff and by his objection to her anti-Semitism, she walks out on him.

Hoping to see his parents in Lodz, Salomon rides a tram through the ghetto and is horrified by the misery he sees. On returning, he learns that Leni is pregnant by his friend Gerd; distraught, he tells her mother his secret, which she promises to keep. A discrepancy in his papers threatens to give him away, but he is saved when the administration office is bombed. Under siege, Salomon later surrenders to Soviet troops, who show him photographs of the concentration camps, and are about to have him shot when he is recognised by Isaak, who has survived the camps. Isaak tells him that

their parents died in Lodz, and the two set out together. In a coda, it is revealed that Salomon emigrated to Palestine, and the real-life Salomon Perel is seen today in Israel.

● The telling of Salomon Perel's nightmarish odyssey begins with an intertitle assuring us that what we are about to see is a true story; and it ends with Perel himself, an old man whose distracted chanting gives no clue to his thoughts, nor provides any immediate comprehensible commentary on what has preceded it. The appearance of the genuine article might retroactively endorse the film's authenticity; but throughout the story, the viewer may justifiably have qualms about believing the film's protestations of veracity, let alone Perel's own apparently unverifiable account of his life (which, the director insists, can be and has been verified).

Capping the string of outrageous coincidences that save his life, the climax seems to test probability too far. On the very point of being shot by a concentration camp survivor – a symbolic gesture on the part of the Russian army – Perel is saved when he is recognised by another survivor, his own brother and virtual double, the very image of how he himself might have ended up. In fact, this is the one factual sleight of hand that director Holland has admitted to – in reality, Perel was spotted by a cousin, although the circumstances were apparently the same.

The truth of the story is important not so much because of any misgivings we might feel about being told a shaggy-dog story on such a serious subject as the Holocaust; but rather because truth and deceit are the very material of the story. If this were merely about a series of misunderstandings leading to one man's survival, it would be an inconsequential picaresque yarn; but the question of truthfulness (to history, to racial/cultural identity, to oneself) makes this a moral story, and leads us to ask to what degree Perel is morally compromised by the mere fact of his survival. For Perel, survival might be grounds for that same guilt felt by so many of the Holocaust gener-



Flower of Nordic youth: Marco Hofschneider, Julie Delpy

ation who saw their contemporaries die; the experience is all the more pointed in the case of the boy depicted here, skating in blithe semi-ignorance from identity to identity, always endangered but never touched.

Holland's Perel is of necessity a hypocrite, a man who accepts quite actively the identities others see in him. But throughout, the fact of his circumcision remains the only constant to his story and to his identity. The film begins with baby Salomon's ritual circumcision, and his subsequent adventures are structured around this one tangible sign of difference. Not surprisingly, that difference is sexually charged – it is what allows him to discover an 'other' identity of a different kind, when befriended by the homosexual Robert; and it is what constitutes the decisive barrier between him and Leni's sexual promise. With Robert, it is implied that Salomon falls into a homosexual identity as easily as he becomes a Komsomolets or a "pure Nordic" cadet, and that unspoken displacement of sexual identity gives a special charge to the sexual blockage he later experiences with Leni, when he is prevented from fully becoming the healthy heterosexual flower of Nordic youth.

For much of the time, the story's cruel ironies are lent a reassuring sheen by the look of the film – a painstaking and occasionally pastel reconstruction of wartime Europe that at moments veers towards unalloyed spectacle (visually, the film's nostalgic authenticity recalls *Wajda's A Love in Germany*, with which it shares a designer). In the Academy, with its massed ranks of cadets and its swastika-bottomed swimming pool, the film seems to yield to the seduction of the Nazi spectacle. Yet this seduction is central to the film's argument, for it is what enables Perel to subsist from identity to identity: the moment when he receives his own copy of *Mein Kampf* is almost like an authentic welcoming home, even though he cannot possibly be at home in the Academy.

The film breaks through this spectacle in one pointed metaphor. Visiting Lodz, Perel finds that the tramcar runs right through the ghetto, and that the passengers' eyes are shielded from the ghetto's horrors by painted-over windows. He peers through a gap in the paint at this taboo spectacle, which he and we are granted only partially, in fragments. At one point, he is convinced he sees his mother, though all we see is a shapeless, barely animated bunch of rags. In a way, he is right – if this Jewish boy in disguise can be the archetypal German cadet, then in response every ghetto woman can be the archetypal abandoned mother. This painful failed encounter cuts through the film's tendency to mere anecdote, to become a potent metaphor of like's uneasy (mis)-recognition of like, and a resonant image of a war in which – to paraphrase a recent popular truism – identity was the first casualty, if not necessarily the most grievous one.

Jonathan Romney

Freejack

USA 1992

Director: Geoff Murphy

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Morgan Creek

Productions

Executive Producers

James G. Robinson

David Nicksay

Gary Barber

Producers

Ronald Shusett

Stuart Oken

Associate Producers

Joe Alves

Linda Shusett

Anthony Jon Rudio

Production Executive

Lynn Raynor

Production Associates

Nanette L. Guidebeck

NY:

Lori H. Schwartz

Production Controllers

Todd P. Smith

Sheldon M. Katz

Production

Co-ordinators

Alessandra M. Cuomo

NY:

Jacqueline Anteau

Production Managers

Unit:

Joseph Caracciolo Jnr

NY:

Jennifer Oates

Location Managers

John B. Griffin

NY:

Donna E. Bloom

Location Co-ordinator

Ginger Sledge

Post-production

Supervisor

Jody Levin

2nd Unit Director

Mickey Gilbert

Casting

Pam Dixon

Associate:

Caryn Richmond

Additional:

Chez Casting

Joan Lynn Casting

Extras:

Atlanta Casting

Extras NY:

Joy Todd, Inc.

Assistant Directors

Jerry Ballew

Michael Haley

Thomas Zapata

Glen Trotiner

2nd Unit:

Bob Girolami

Anthony Desposito

NY:

Burt Harris

Tim Williams

Screenplay

Steven Pressfield

Ronald Shusett

Dan Gilroy

Story

Steven Pressfield

Ronald Shusett

Based on the novel

Immortality, Inc. by

Robert Shekley

Director of Photography

Amir Mokri

Colour

Technicolor

Additional Photography

Matt Leonetti

Effects Photography

Scott Beattie

Alex Funke

Optical Photography

Marlo Pabon

Kristopher Gregg

Greg Johnson

Animation Photography

Patrick Kenly

Matte Photography

Brian Adams

James Green

Camera Operators

Mitch Dubin

Martin J. Layton

Dick Kratina

Peter Norman

John Kiser

Video Operator

Greg Morse

Special Visual Effects

Dream Quest Images

Visual Effects

Executive Producer:

Keith Shartle

Producer:

Walter Hart

Supervisor:

Richard Hoover

Co-ordinator:

J.W. Kompare

Editors:

Barry Watkins

Matt Cope

Optical Supervisor

Jeff Matakovich

Optical Line-up

Beth Block

Georgie Huntington

Matte Artists

Jesse Silver

Ken Allen

Robert Scifo

Computer Graphics

Designer

Tim Landry

Computer

Animation/Displays

Video Image

Animation

Clint Colver

Rotoscope Supervisor

James Valentine

Editors

Dennis Virkler

Additional:

Michael Ruscio

John Wright

Editorial Consultant

Bruce Green

Production Designer

Joe Alves

Art Director

James A. Taylor

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Sean Marshall

Set Decorators

Bruce A. Gibeson

NY:

Alan Hicks

Set Dressers

Randall Reid Milazzo

Grant Scharbo

Cary Oldknow

Gary Graffrath

Jonathan Short

Mary Deacon

NY:

Bill Reynolds

Conceptual Design

Jon Farht

Conceptual Artist

James Lima

Draughtsmen

Thomas Minton

Jonathan Short

Special Effects

Supervisor

Joey DiGaetano

Special Effects

Foremen:

David Fletcher

Lou Carlucci

Chuck Stewart

Co-ordinator:

Edward A. Drohan IV

Processed Effects

Mel Neiman

Brian Banks

Model Shop Supervisor

David Goldberg



Touch-tag: Emilio Estevez

Music

Trevor Jones

Music Director

Arty Kane

Music Performed by

Solo Evi:

Judd Miller

Solo Saxophone:

Tom Scott

Orchestrations

Brad Dechter

Music Supervisor

Gary Goetzman

Music Editor

Kenneth Karman

Synthesizers

Michael Boddicker

Guy Dagul

Randy Kerber

Programmer:

Roger King

Songs

"Hit Between the Eyes"

by K. Meine, R.

Schenker, H. Rarebell,

J. Vallence, performed

by Scorpions;

"International Bright

Young Thing" by M.

Edwards, performed by

Jesus Jones; "Break the

Spell" by A. Johannes,

N. Schneider, performed

by Eleven; "Emotional

Earthquake" by

N. Kenny, S. Kenny,

A. Shaw, P. Densley,

C. Francis, performed

by 2 Die 4; "Down in

Flames" by B. Payne,

M. Kibbee, C. Fuller,

P. Barree, N. Park,

performed by Little

Feat; "Thieves" by A.

Jourgensen, P. Barker,

C. Connelly, K. Ogilvie,

performed by Ministry;

"Sugar Ray" by Reid/

Reid, performed by

Jesus & Mary Chain;

"Mona Lisa Smiles",

"Hindu Rap" by and

performed by Jane

Child

Costume Design

Lisa Jensen

Wardrobe Supervisor

Elizabeth Shelton

Costumers

Keith Lewis

Hartsell Taylor

Kathy Heiner

Costume Armourer

Henri Ewaskio

Head Make-up Artist

Jeanne Van Phue

Make-up Artist

Eddie Braun

Peter Bucossi

PJ Chammel

Title Design

R.E.D. Productions

Additional Titles/Opticals

Howard Anderson Co.

Pacific Title

The Post Group

Cinema Research

Corporation

Supervising

Sound Editors

Louis L. Edemann

Donald J. Malouf

Sound Editors

Paul Timothy Carden

Tim Chau

Jeff Clark

Albert Gasser

◀ learns that Julie, his girlfriend, is now a high-ranking executive with the corporation that has hired Vacendak. Brad sells Alex out to Vacendak, but is killed in the crossfire as Alex escapes. Alex makes his way to Julie, who doubts that he can be who he says he is because he has managed to get past her building's security. But this turns out to have been arranged by Vacendak as part of a trap for Alex. Julie is convinced, and helps Alex escape from Vacendak, taking him to link up with the rebellious drop-out Boone. Vacendak pursues Alex, but is hampered by Michele's men, who want to kill Alex to prevent Julie's boss, McCandless, from being brought back to life.

Julie and Alex invade the corporation's headquarters, and enter the chapel region where the discarnate McCandless dwells. McCandless is in love with Julie and hopes to win her by becoming Alex. He stalls Alex by pretending to give in until Vacendak arrives, but the transfer is aborted half-way through by Michele. Alex claims to be McCandless and has Vacendak execute Michele, then drives off with Julie. Vacendak tells Alex that he knows McCandless could not drive, but that he has let him go because he disliked Michele.

● Robert Shekley, whose major strengths as a science-fiction writer are a satiric streak and a fondness for wonderfully developed crazy ideas, seems doomed in the cinema to find his ironic tales of future media jungles turned into dim-witted action movies. *Freejack*, from his 1959 novel of a comic after-life *Immortality, Inc.*, follows *The Tenth Victim* and *The Prize of Peril* in erasing almost all the spark and strangeness of Shekley's original in favour of a thick-ear game of touch-tag between a bewildered Emilio Estevez and a corpse-like Mick Jagger, presided over by the discarnate spectre of a briefly box-office Anthony Hopkins.

Geoff Murphy's film, unlike his earlier and excellent *The Quiet Earth*, is rooted in the pre-Spielberg/Lucas science fiction of the 70s, when similarly cinema-suited original novels were hammered into a dispiriting succession of faceless action pictures (*The Omega Man*, *Soylent Green*, *Logan's Run*, *Damnation Alley*). The plot comes to a halt at one point so Vacendak can capture Alex but let him go on a whim just to keep the story moving, and the vision of a hellish future is far less detailed and effective than the quickest Charles Band movie. In this context, it becomes beside the point to complain that the heroine fails to age in nineteen years, or that the supposedly omnipotent McCandless might have noticed the treacherous tendencies of his second-in-command. The search for a redeeming feature turns up only Amanda Plummer's amusing turn as a hard-boiled nun who quotes the 'turn the other cheek' dictum before kneeling a corporate goon in the groin: "But, of course, our saviour never really had to deal with assholes like you".

Kim Newman

Grand Canyon

USA 1991

Director: Lawrence Kasdan

Certificate

15

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

20th Century Fox

Producers

Lawrence Kasdan

Charles Okun

Michael Grillo

Associate Producer

Meg Kasdan

Production Co-ordinator

Danis Regal O'Connell

2nd Unit Production Manager

Alan Wertheim

Unit Production Manager

Charles Okun

Location Managers

John Panzarella

Steph Benseman

Casting

Jennifer Shull

Associates:

Donna Lee

Beth Shull

Extras:

Central Casting

Jimmy Jue

ADR Voices:

Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors

Michael Grillo

Carey Dietrich

Kenneth Silverstein

Screenplay

Lawrence Kasdan

Meg Kasdan

Director of Photography

Owen Roizman

Colour

DeLuxe

Visual Effects

Photography

Alex Funke

Plate:

Chuck Schuman

Pinblock:

Jim Green

Optical Photography

Mario Pabon

Kris Gregg

Camera Operator

Rob Hahn

Video Operators

Mark Burnett

Rick Dungan

Special Visual Effects

Dream Quest Images

Visual Effects

Executive Producer:

Keith Shurtle

Producer:

David McCullough

Supervisor:

Hoyt Yeatman

Production Manager:

Jack Fitch

Art Director:

John Farhat

Editorial Supervisor:

Kathy Chasen-Hay

Rotoscope Supervisor

James Valentine

Model Shop Supervisor

David Goldberg

Optical Supervisor

Jeff Matakovich

Editor

Carol Littleton

Associate Editor

Axel Hubert

Production Designer

Bo Welch

Art Director

Tom Duffield

Set Design

Richard Mays

Sally Thornton

Set Decorator

Cheryl Carasik

Special Effects

Burt Dalton

Special Physical Effects

Rich Helmer

Music

James Newton Howard

Music Directors

Marty Paich

Choral:

Paul Salamunovich

Music Co-ordinator

Michael Mason

Orchestrations

Brad Dechter

Chris Boardman

Music Editor

Jim Weidman

Songs

"Lawyers, Guns and Money", "Searching for a Heart" by and performed by Warren Zevon; "She's Leaving Home" by Lennon, Paul McCartney; "It's Only a Paper Moon" by Billy Rose, E.Y. Harburg, Harold Arlen; "Quiet on the Set" by M.C. Ren, Dr. Dre, "F" the Police" by Ice Cube, M.C. Ren, Dr. Dre, performed by N.W.A.; "Only in America" by and performed by Gardner Cole; "Am I Late" by Adam Spira, performed by Souled Out

Costume Design

Aggie Guerard Rodgers

Costume Supervisor

Winnie D. Brown

Costumers

Key:

Ruby Manis

Additional:

Alan Martin

Make-up Artists

Leonard Engelman

Steve Martin:

Frank Griffin Jr

Special Make-up Effects

Thomas R. Burman

Bari Dreiband-Burman

Title Design

Jeffrey Bacon

John O'Brien

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research Corporation

Supervising Sound Editor

Robert Grieve

Sound Editors

J.H. Arruffat

Jim Matheny

Dave Stone

ADR Supervisor

Beth Bergeron

ADR Editors

Kimberly Harris

Jonathan Klein

Foley Editors

John Murray

Michael Dressel

Sound Recordists

Matt Patterson

David MacMillan

Music:

John Richards

Brian Reeves

Ross Pallone

Foley Recordist

Greg Orloff

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Kevin O'Connell

Rick Kline

Sound Effects Editors

Stu Bernstein

Steve Mann

Special Sound Effects:

Alan Howarth

Foley Artists

Dan O'Connell

Alicia Stevenson

Advisers

Medical:

Linda Klein

Basketball:

Malek Mansour

Production Assistants

Diana Vilkaitis

Paul Bode

Steven Doren

Jake Kasdan

Elia Martinez

Michael Yheulon

Visual Effects:

Craig Moore

Stunts

Lafaye Baker

Hank Baumert

Gary Baxley

Charlie Brewer

Anthony Brubaker

Eric Chambers

Myra Chason

Jim Connors

Diana Cuevas

Jadie David

Kenneth Day

Maria Doest

Lionel Douglass

Bill Erickson

Greg Gault

Sandra Lee Gimpel

Pat Green

Stephen P. Hart

Glenn W. Herpst

Chuck Hicks

Leslie Howard

Chris Howell

Alton Leo Jones

Gary Littlejohn

Solly Marx

Jim Morange

Brad Orrison

Mark Orrison

Peter Stader

John Michael Stewart

Tierre Turner

William Washington

Gary Wayton

Animal Trainer

Boone Narr

Helicopter Pilot

John Sarviss

Cast

Danny Glover

Simon

Kevin Kline

Mack

Steve Martin

Davis

Mary McDonnell

Claire

Mary-Louise Parker

Dee

Alfre Woodard

Jane

Jeremy Sisto

Roberto

Tina Lifford

Deborah

Patrick Malone

Otis

Randle Mell

Alley Baron

Sarah Trigger

Vanessa

Destinee DeWalt

Kelley

Candace Mead

Loren Mead

Claire's Baby

Shaun Baker

Rocstar

K. Todd Freeman

Wipe

Deon Sams

Jimmy

Christopher M. Brown

Rotor

Gregg Dandridge

Eddie

Branscombe Richmond

Ace Cop

Walt Jordan

Deuce Cop

Todd Allen

Myers

Carole Ita White

Morning Nurse

Basil Wallace

Insurance Salesman

Georgina Lindsey

Cathy Fox

Jack Kehler

Steve Fox

Marlee Shelton

Amanda

Lynn Salvatori

Woman in

Baseball Cap

Jim Morange

Bus Driver

hoods, and the police helicopter hovers ceaselessly over nocturnal streets, the chunking sound of its rotor darkening everybody's dreams.

As if in direct riposte to *L.A. Story*, it's the Steve Martin character who suffers the worst assault. A producer of splatter movies, trading in fake violence, Davis can't take the real thing seriously: he responds to a mugger with a wisecrack, and gets his thigh blown open. (The scene spares us, and Davis, nothing; as he lies bleeding on the ground, he has visibly wet his pants.) But all the main characters encounter violence, or the threat of it. In one of the film's most disturbing images, Deborah and her daughter, out shopping, edge around a woman matter-of-factly scrubbing a huge bloodstain off the sidewalk outside her home.

Grand Canyon can be seen as the logical successor to *The Big Chill*, with another group of people facing disillusionment and the depredations of time, trying to work out how and why their world turned sour on them. A more fruitful comparison, though, might be with another recent study of urban putrescence, John Sayles' *City of Hope*. Where Sayles scrupulously plotted the cross-connections between his extensive cast, tracing the web of fear, greed and graft that linked them, Kasdan's film lacks any hint of a political dimension. Even Mack's work as an immigration lawyer – highly relevant, one would think, to the tensions of a multi-racial city – scarcely figures. The shootings, the muggings, the hatred erupt inexplicably, as much forces of nature as the earthquake that rocks Mack and Claire's house.

For a film that talks so much about connections, *Grand Canyon* makes very few (except in the limited sense of people meeting each other). Instead we get diffuse statements of discontent, summed up in Simon's "Everything's supposed to be different from the way it is". To the proliferating symptoms of social collapse, Kasdan can only oppose small acts of individual well-meaning: a baby adopted, a family rehoused. And the central, supposedly redeeming metaphor of the Grand Canyon itself never goes much further than Simon's meditation on how our petty human problems seem of no account beside its eternal vastness. Glover delivers the speech superbly, almost disguising its essential banality.

Films, of course, aren't obliged to provide solutions, as Kasdan reminds us with the farewell remark he gives to Davis, the film's most fluent and least reliable character. "All of life's riddles are answered in the movies", says the producer, before vanishing into the shadows of a huge sound stage, re-entering the dark cycle of violence depicted and enacted. But in trying to lift its vision away from Davis' cynicism towards some kind of affirmative statement, *Grand Canyon* ends up seeming hollow. For all the excellence of its acting, the wit and humanity of its script, Kasdan's film leaves us – as it leaves its characters – staring into a large hole.

Philip Kemp

The Hand that Rocks the Cradle

USA 1992

Director: Curtis Hanson

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Buena Vista Pictures

Executive Producers

Ted Field

Rick Jaffa

Robert W. Cort

Producer

David Madden

Co-producer

Ira Halberstadt

Production Associates

Dana Belcastro

Robin A. Schreier

Production

Co-ordinators

Sheila Warner

Johannah Lyons

Unit Production

Manager

Ira Halberstadt

Location Managers

Peter Allen

Meg McHutchison

Casting

Junie Lowry-Johnson

Associate:

Ron Surma

Seattle:

Susan Dixon

Heidi Walker

Extras:

Amy Caton-Ford

Extras Associate:

Deedra Ricketts

Assistant Directors

Michael Daves

Ray Greenfield

Brenda Kalosh

Screenplay

Amanda Silver

Director of Photography

Robert Elswit

Colour

Alpha Cine

Prints by Technicolor

Additional

Camera Operator

Marty Oppenheimer

Editor

John F. Link

Production Designer

Edward Pisoni

Visual Consultant

Carol Fenelon

Art Director

Mark Zuelzke

Set Design

Gilbert Wong

Set Decorator

Sandy Reynolds Wasco

Set Dresser

Dave Saltzman

Scenic Artist

Steven E. Eyrse

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Bob Riggs

Music

Graeme Revell

Music Director

Tim Simonec

Music Extracts

"Poor Wand'ring One",

"O Dry the Glist'ning

Tear" from *Pirates of*

Penzance, "My Gallant

Crew Good Morning",

"Sir Joseph's Barge Is

Seen" from *HMS*

Pinafore by Gilbert and

Sullivan, performed

by D'Oyly Carte Opera

Company

Orchestrations

Tim Simonec

Additional:

Graeme Revell

Music Editor

Dick Bernstein

Songs

"Seattle Today Theme"

by Dan Dean; "Say It

(Over and Over Again)"

by Frank Loesser,

Jimmy McHugh,

performed by The John

Coltrane Quartet

Costume

Design:

Jennifer Von

Mayrhauser

Supervisor:

Kathleen Kiatta

Costumer

Wendy M. Craig

Make-up

Annie F. Maniscalco

Prosthetics:

Craig Reardon

Title Design

Saxon/Ross Film Design

Titles/Opticals

Buena Vista Optical

Supervising

Sound Editor

Dane A. Davis

Sound Editors

Dialogue:

Kimberly Lowe

Martin J. Bram

Maciek Malish

ADR Supervisor

Randy Vandegrift

Foley Editors

Nicholas Forshager

Tom Hammond

Debbie Rosenblum

Chuck Michael

Sound Recordists

James Pilcher

Music:

Dennis Sands

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Richard Portman

Dan Wallin

Anna Behlmer

Sound Effects Editors

Kini Kay

Todd Toon

Foley Artists

Joan Rowe

Gregg Barbanell

Asthma Consultants

Richard B. Goodman

Kenneth P. Steinberg

Architectural Adviser

Artilla Barcha

Production Assistants

Lynn McCracken

Rahi Hudson

Richard Arnold

Adam Berman

Sam George

Stunt Co-ordinator

John A. Moio

Stunts

Cris Thomas-Palomino

Dan Barringer

Lynn Salvatori

David L. Boushey

Jamie Bunch-Elliott

Barbara Klein

Cast

Annabella Sciorra

Claire Bartel

Rebecca De Mornay

Peyton Flanders

Matt McCoy

Michael Bartel

Ernie Hudson

Solomon

Julianne Moore

Marlene

Madeline Zima

Emma Bartel

John de Lancie

Dr Mott

Kevin Skousen

Marty

Mitchell Laurance

Lawyer

Justin Zaremby

Schoolyard Bully

Eric Melander

Jennifer Melander

Ashley Melander

Baby Joe

Cliff Lenz

Penny LeGate

"Seattle Today" Hosts

Mary Anne Owen

Dr Mott's Nurse

Therese Xavier Tintling

Receptionist

Todd Jamieson

Surgeon

Laura Ferri

Dee Dee Van Zyl

Emergency Room

Nurses

Cristine McMurdo-Wallis

Sara Jennifer Sharp

Peyton's Nurses

Susan Chin

Kimberly Hill

Newscastrs

Jane Jones

Woman in Park

Ericka Matson

Robert James

Aimee Kanemori

Elane Nickelsen

Children in Schoolyard

Brian Finney

Botanical Gardens

Worker

Stephen West

Federal Express Clerk

David Scully

Julie Clemmons

Lab Workers

Joseph Franklin

Man at Cleaners

Tom Francis

Marlene's Assistant

Jeff Conkel

Paramedic

Patrick Ryals

Policeman

Chip Lucia

Realtor

Edwin Cook

Linda O. Cook

Tim Dornberg

Marabina Jaimes

Gracie Moore

Tina Panella-Hart

David Povall

Bert Rosario

ADR Voices

9,921 feet

110 minutes

● Claire and Michael Bartel, who have a young daughter, Emma, employ Solomon, a black man from a mental health rehabilitation scheme, to fix up their house and garden. Claire is pregnant and, during a check-up, her gynaecologist Dr Mott sexually abuses her. She files a complaint; Mott is struck off and subsequently commits suicide. The shock causes his wife, who is expecting her first child, to have a miscarriage and then a hysterectomy. Six months later, the Bartels have a new baby, Joey. Claire decides to employ a nanny so that she can pursue her horticultural interests. Mrs Mott, giving her name as Peyton Flanders, enquires about the position. Claire takes her on and Peyton moves in. On the first night, however, Peyton goes to the baby's room and suckles him. The following evening, she allows Emma to watch horror films on TV while the Bartels are out.

Peyton's schemes become increasingly vindictive. She visits Michael at work and suggests that he give a surprise party for Claire. She also hints that Marlene, a family friend, might help with the preparations. One day, Solomon sees Peyton feeding Joey. She threatens him, and later insinuates to Claire that Solomon has been molesting Emma. She then hides a pair of Emma's pants in Solomon's tool cart, where Claire later discovers them. Solomon is dismissed. Claire begins to



Beware: Madeline Zima, Rebecca De Mornay

suspect that Michael is having an affair with Marlene. She discovers Marlene's cigarette lighter in her husband's pocket and confronts him.

Marlene becomes suspicious of Peyton and discovers her true identity. She goes to the Bartels' house to warn them, but is killed in the greenhouse in an 'accident' that Peyton intended for Claire. Claire discovers Marlene's body and has an asthma attack. Unable to find her inhaler, she falls into a coma. While Claire is in hospital, Peyton tries unsuccessfully to seduce Michael. When she returns home, Claire decides to investigate Peyton's past. Following Marlene's movements on her last day, she ends up at the Motts' old house and realises who Peyton is. She returns home for a final showdown. A fight ensues between the Bartel family and Peyton, who appears to be winning, until Solomon turns up. Peyton is finally killed, skewered on the Bartels' white picket fence.

● This vamped-up version of *The Nanny* crossed with *Fatal Attraction* has had US audiences flocking to it in droves. Its moral is simple: women beware women, and guard your family with your life. "Never let an attractive woman occupy a position of power in your home", warns the Bartels' ill-fated friend Marlene. And she's proved right. For Peyton, her own family ruined and a hysterectomy apparently having put paid to her chances of another, is bent on seeking recompense from the woman who has it all. The Bartels' world is bathed in sunlight. The asthmatic Claire (an echo of the Victorian consumptive heroine) attends to her eco-conscious activities in a *House and Garden* paradise, surrounded by the accoutrements of happy family life, from fresh fruit juice-maker to mentally retarded handyman.

By contrast, Peyton – a name resonant with melodramatic excess – is endowed with few redeeming characteristics. Her house is cold and uninviting – barren, in other words. As Mrs Mott, she wears a militaristic jacket, the uniform of career women in the avaricious 80s, while the shock which causes her to miscarry is not her husband's death, but the news that his estate has been frozen. A wearisome formula unwinds as the psychopathic Peyton concocts ever more despicable ruses to push the saintly Claire over the edge. In this distasteful battle between the two women, Peyton more than once hits where it hurts. And her punishment fits her crime, as the white picket fence is driven like a stake through her heart.

If the good woman/bad woman paradigm seems depressingly out of date, it is equalled by the racist

Une histoire inventée (An Imaginary Tale)

France 1990

Director: André Forcier

Certificate

(Not yet issued)

Distributor

Mayfair Palace

Production Companies

C. M. Luca Inc/The

Téléscène Film Group

With the collaboration of the National Film

Board of Canada

With financial assistance from

Téléfilm Canada/

La Société

Générale des Industries

Culturelles du

Québec/Super

Ecran/Radio Québec

Executive Producers

Jamie Brown

Claudio Luca

Producers

Claudio Luca

Robin Spry

Line Producers

Lisa Abastado

NFB:

Monique Lefourneau

Associate Producer

NFB:

Doris Girard

Production

Co-ordinators

Danielle Ste-Marie

NFB:

Julie Desroches

Production Managers

Jean-Marie Comeau

Estelle Lemieux

Location Manager

Michèle St Arnaud

Post-production

Suzanne Comtois

Casting

Marc Larose

Maryse Lapointe

Jacques Marcotte

Assistant Directors

Anne Murphy

Carole Dubuc

Normand Bourgie

Othello Scenes Director

Gervais Gaudreau

Screenplay

André Forcier

Jacques Marcotte

Director of Photography

Georges Dufaux

In colour

Graphic Designer

Anne Forget-Copelin

Editor

François Gill

Art Director

Réal Ouellette

Set Decorator

Réal Proulx

Special Effects

Louis Craig

Mario Dumont

Jacques Langlois

Tapestry

Jacqueline Rousseau

Music

Serge Fiori

Music Performed by

Piano

Acoustic Guitar:

Yvon Bellamare

Trumpet:

Roger Walls

Music Arrangements

Serge Fiori

Songs

"Somebody Tonite"

by Nanette Workman,

performed by France

Castel; "They Said No"

by Warren "Slim"

Williams, André

Forcier, Jacques

Marcotte, performed

by France Castel,

Warren "Slim"

Williams; "Theme du

Port" by John Bodine

Costume Design

Gaudeline Sauriol

Wardrobe

Supervisor:

Christiane Tessier

Make-up

Louise Marleau:

Marie-Angèle Breitner-

Protat

Sound Design

Marcel Pothier

Sound Editors

Jérôme Décarte

Dialogue:

Viateur Paiement

Sound Recordists

Jo Caron

Music:

Rob Heaney

Post-syn:

Diane Boucher

François Asselin

Sound Re-recordists

Jean-Pierre Joulé

Shelley Craig

Adrian Coll

Sound Effects Editor

Antoine Morin

Production Assistants

Pierre Lambert

Louise Laberge

Jean-Pierre Fautoux

Michel Bolduc

Danielle Fontaine

Stunt Co-ordinator

Yves Fournier

Animal Trainer

Ciné-Zoo:

Jean Cardinal

Subtitles

Kinograph:

Robert Gray

Laser Video Titres -

Paris

Cast

Jean Lapointe

Gaston

Louise Marleau

Florence

Charlotte Laurier

Soledad

Marc Messier

Lentaigues

Jean-François Pichette

Tibo

France Castel

Alys

Tony Nardi

Toni

Marc Gélinas

Gros-Pierre

Louis De Santis

Alfredo

Warren "Slim" Williams

Slim

Donald Pilon

Roland

Léo Munger

Nicole

Louise Gagnon

Arlette

Angelo Cadet

Théodule

Denis Bouchard

Piano Tuner

Denys Paris

Courtemanche

Paul Cagette

Clément (Iago)

Patrice Coquerneau

Cassio

Dominic Lavallée

Julien (Roderigo)

Lisette Dufour

Emilia

Marcel Fournier

Roger Gingras

Charlotte Bernard

Quvreuse

Roland Laroche

Doorman

Alain Gendreau

Policeman

Alda Viero

Alberta Bonfiglio

Ghyslain Dupont-Hebert

Weeping Women

Pierre Pageau

Patrice Arbour

Priests

François Sasseville

Road-Sweeper

Jean-Marie Lapointe

Jacques Jr Vaillancourt

Men of Main

Elise Varo

Carmen Ferland

Waitresses

Guy Provencher

Maurice

Céline Pinet

Margot

Yvon Charette

Luc Proulx

Suzanne Lambert

Characters in Othello

9,000 feet

100 minutes

Subtitles

● Having failed to find work in Cleveland, ageing jazz trumpeter Gaston returns to Montreal to play in the Black Butter club run by his friend Gros-Pierre. His two accompanists, pianist Alys and bass player Slim, are engaged, but as a devout Baptist, Slim will not allow Alys to touch him until they are married. Toni, a theatre director, is mounting a production of *Othello* in a theatre bought for him by his ex-mobster uncle Alfredo, who has imported a coachload from the Palermo Old Folks' Club to ensure full houses.

Present on the opening night is Florence Desruisseaux, who is followed everywhere by an entourage of forty besotted ex-lovers led by the taxi driver Théodule. Backstage, Florence's daughter Soledad, playing Desdemona, discovers her lover Tibo, playing Othello, making love with the wardrobe mistress Arlette. After the show, Florence takes Soledad to the Black Butter to see Gaston, who has always resisted her charms, even though he is the only man she has ever loved; but Florence is disturbed by the sexual rapport between Soledad and Gaston.

The next morning, Soledad tells Tibo she is leaving him; in a jealous rage, he pursues Gaston, who is saved by the intervention of Lentaigues, a drunken, down-at-heel policeman who is a regular at the Black Butter. Alfredo, who takes the events in the play as seriously as if they were real, gives Tibo his golden revolver, urging him not to make Desdemona suffer too much in the play. The next night, Tibo, rejected by Soledad, rapes her. Sitting at home distraught, he has to be dragged to the theatre by Alfredo's henchmen.

At the Black Butter, Gaston gives a virtuoso performance, but Florence's current lover Rolland, jealous of the attention she is paying him, hits him in the mouth with a bottle. With Gaston unable to play, Alys and Slim start

working as a duo, to Gaston's embittered disgust. Lentaigues and Gros-Pierre decide to bring Gaston and Soledad together by handcuffing them to one another, so that the two are forced to go on stage together, to rapturous applause. The next morning, Florence finds Gaston and Soledad in bed, and Toni signs Gaston up permanently for the play. Tibo kills Gaston and himself with Alfredo's gun, and the funeral for the two men erupts into a fracas. In the confusion, Florence and Soledad escape in Théodule's taxi, pursued by the army of ex-lovers, which now includes Rolland.

● The invented story which underpins André Forcier's tale is Iago's deception of Othello – a parallel made clear when Soledad drags a bewildered Gaston on stage and speaks Desdemona's line, "Behold my imaginary lover". Jealousy is the running theme – Tibo and Rolland are both jealous of Gaston, Florence is jealous of Soledad, Lentaigues' girlfriend Nicole is briefly jealous of the attention he pays Florence, and Gaston – relegated to a bar stool – is jealous of Alys hogging the limelight with her new singing act. Ironically, the only time that the circle of jealousy is broken is when the 40 ex-lovers – who all seem to be on pretty amicable terms – stand in the snow listening to Florence make noisy love with her latest beau, and join in with a chorus of enraptured sighs.

But it would be misleading to suggest that Forcier and co-writer Jacques Marcotte are out to subvert *Othello*'s racial and sexual schema. They simply use the Shakespearean context to bind this rather diffuse yarn. Yet a sense of randomness pervades the action, with threads picked up and dropped as casually as Florence discards lovers – like the parrot that savages Lentaigues in the opening scene, before disappearing entirely, or like Arlette, who plays a disappointingly small part for such a heartily, self-consciously ribald figure.

The film's casual eccentricity, and its desolate after-hours setting, suggest the hung-over *demi-monde* of an Alan Rudolph film, particularly in the way characters slope groggily from confrontation to confrontation. There is also some of the cartoonish absurdity of a Raymond Queneau novel. The plot depends on the deployment of cartoon stereotypes in a loose narrative – the mature vamp, the sexy ingénue, the dictatorial theatre director – and most of them work purely because of the inventiveness of the acting.

But the film suffers from the lameness of some of its jokes – the whimsical Italian music that accompanies Alfredo, a running gag about Montreal cops' sensitivity to 'ethnics', and the camp theatre critic who confesses his shock at falling for Florence. The film benefits from being rooted in Montreal as a place and a culture (it rings some intriguing changes on local accents), but despite this, and the Shakespeare, it is finally too hermetic to be much more than a light diversion.

Jonathan Romney



Bard after hours: Charlotte Laurier

Howards End

United Kingdom 1991

Director: James Ivory

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Mayfair Entertainment

Production Company

Merchant Ivory

Productions

Executive Producer

Paul Bradley

Producer

Ismail Merchant

Co-producer

Ann Wingate

Production

Co-ordinator

Nick O'Hagan

Production Managers

John Downes

Caroline Hill

Location Manager

Jeanne Ferber

Casting

Celestia Fox

Assistant Directors

Chris Newman

Simon Moseley

Carol Oprey

Screenplay

Ruth Praver Jhabvala

Based on the novel

by E. M. Forster

Director of Photography

Tony Pierce-Roberts

In colour

Editor

Andrew Marcus

Associate Editors

Michelle Gorchow

James Marsh

Production Designer

Luciana Arrighi

Art Director

John Ralph

Set Decorator

Ian Whittaker

Special Effects

Effects Associates

1910. Helen and Margaret Schlegel live with their brother Tibby in London. Helen is invited to stay with the Wilcox family, with whom she has recently become acquainted, at their country home, Howards End. There she falls in love with the younger son Paul, but the affair is short-lived. Months later, Helen attends a concert and inadvertently walks off with a stranger's umbrella. The owner, insurance clerk Leonard Bast, follows her home to retrieve it. Taking the Schlegels' calling card, he returns to the house where he lives with his girlfriend Jacky. The same day, the Wilcoxes move into the apartment opposite the Schlegels for the wedding of their son Charles to Dolly. Margaret pays a courtesy visit to Mrs Wilcox, and a friendship develops. When it transpires that the lease on the Schlegels' house is about to run out, Mrs Wilcox offers to help. She is, however, seriously ill and soon dies, leaving a note bequeathing Howards End to Margaret. Henry Wilcox and his children destroy the note.

Meanwhile, Jacky turns up at the Schlegels demanding to know where Leonard Bast, now her husband, is. The following day, Bast visits to apologise for his wife's outburst. The Schlegels decide to take an interest in the young man's affairs. By chance, the sisters learn that the company he works for is about to go bankrupt. They warn him, but he resents their interference. Henry Wilcox invites Margaret for lunch. Later, he suggests that she take over the lease on his London house. Subsequently, she accepts his proposal of marriage. Meanwhile, Helen learns that Bast changed his job but was then made redundant, while his previous company continues to prosper.

Margaret joins Henry at his Shropshire home for preparations for his daughter's wedding. During the celebrations, Helen arrives with the Basts demanding that Henry help them.

There Jacky recognises Henry as her former lover. Humiliated, Henry refuses to help the Basts. Later, Helen and Leonard meet and end up making love. Helen then disappears to Germany, missing her sister's wedding. Hearing that she is back in England, Margaret arranges to meet her at Howards End, where Helen reveals that she is pregnant by Leonard. In a confrontation between Charles Wilcox and Leonard, who have both followed the others to Howards End, Leonard is killed. Charles is convicted of manslaughter. The following summer, Henry announces to his family that he is leaving Howards End to Margaret, who will in turn leave it to Helen's son. Henry finally explains to Margaret the secret about Mrs Wilcox's original bequest.

With only *The Longest Journey* left to film, *Howards End* is a sign that the Forster screen adaptation machine is finally grinding to a halt. Written in 1910 and considered to be the author's finest work, the novel's portrayal of moral decay and unscrupulousness in an English society shaken by economic and social change is particularly appropriate in the grey light of the present Depression. Set firmly on home ground, ironically the movie takes as its subject – as well as the issues of inheritance and disenfranchisement found in the original – the very heritage industry that 'the Forster film' has become part of.

The trademark period accessories and engaging acting ensemble are once again in evidence, but both director Ivory and screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, whose script extracts the sharpest teeth from Forster's original dialogue, have tried to get to the heart of the novel's world view. The attempt to be faithful results in an episodic structure which crams the rise of the lower middle class and the New Woman into two-and-a-half hours. Nevertheless, this is a more troubling and

rigorous inquest into a bygone era than usual. The shadow of impending modernity is to be found in references to the suffragettes, the motor car and train, echoing Forster's obsession with social and mechanical mobility (one is tempted to speculate that the novelist's plea "only connect" refers as much to railway junctions as to personal encounters).

Their investment in maintaining the status quo makes the outwardly genial Wilcoxes, headed by Anthony Hopkins as the father, the villains of the piece. They embody all that is grasping and greedy, shamelessly buying up England with the profits of their colonial enterprises and living comfortably on a lie. By contrast, the Basts provide the moral and political standards for those around them. Signalling the arrival of the urban white collar worker, their cramped dwelling is shaken by the thundering of a nearby railway line. Samuel West's sensitive Leonard Bast is a tragic hero whose literature-inspired reveries are an escape from his dull office routine, but even these dreams are full of shadows. If West's accent is slightly too near the nasal twang of a Mr Pooter and Nicola Duffett's flame-haired and buxom Jacky is a caricature of a Toulouse-Lautrec show-girl, these characters nevertheless provide a solemn anchor for the film.

Bast is no mere pawn in the game of Fabian *manqué* Helen Schlegel. Rather, his observations provide a cutting critique and a fitting *gravitas* to the finale. While Helen can afford to extol books as "more real than anything...when people fail you there's music and meaning", Bast retorts, "That's for rich people after their dinner". This line rests uneasily with the assumptions of the great English literary heritage, and is a far and passionate cry from the elegant witticisms for which the Forster film is usually admired.

Lizzie Francke

Kikuchi

Japan 1990

Director: Kenchi Iwamoto

Certificate (Not yet issued)	Cast Jiro Yoshimura
Distributor ICA/Vortex Japan	Kikuchi
Production Company Vortex Japan	Yasuhiro Oka
Producer Shuichi Ohi	Man
Assistant Director Yoshio Zohi	Misa Fukuma
Screenplay Kenchi Iwamoto	Woman
Director of Photography Hideo Fukuda	Papa Akiyama
In colour	Laundry Manager
Editor Keiichi Okada	Mama Akiyama
Production Designer Takashi Iwai	Woman with Glasses
Title Design Shin Sobue	Masaya Yasumura
Sound Recorder Hidetoshi Nonaka	Takahashi
Sound Effects Editor Kaoh Nakamura	Daijiro Yoshiwara
	Customer
	Old Woman
	6,165 feet
	68 minutes
	Subtitles

Kikuchi works in a laundry where it is his job to load sheets into the machines, then to dry and fold them. This he does with mechanical efficiency; temporarily without an assistant, he completes his monotonous tasks alone and in silence, apart from the noise of the machines. His boss introduces a new employee, and Kikuchi is instructed to explain the work to him. A break for lunch is taken on benches between the rows of machines.

On his way home, Kikuchi shops at a supermarket where he has become obsessed with one of the check-out girls who lives not far from him. It has become his habit to change into a dark coat, scarf and hat and to spy on her as she cycles home. The new assistant's work proves not up to standard, and the boss has Kikuchi explain his tasks once more. That night, spying on the girl, Kikuchi becomes afraid of discovery and flees. He takes pity on a kitten he finds outside his door and feeds it. The animal briefly becomes a companion, but when it wets his bed, Kikuchi kills it and disposes of the body.

The boss reprimands Kikuchi's assistant, whereupon the man attacks him and flees. That evening, Kikuchi is accidentally run down by the check-out girl on her bicycle and receives a small cut. After a day working alone once more, Kikuchi fortuitously meets the girl at a drink automat. They exchange a few words, as they do again the following evening at the supermarket. That night, Kikuchi hears the sounds of a woman making love through the wall of his room.

On Sunday, he takes his clothes to a laundrette opposite the supermarket, which affords him the opportunity of a few words with the object of his obsession. That night, prompted by a sexually suggestive moment on television, he makes his way to her flat, watching as she once more parks her bicycle. Suddenly he is attacked and pursued by the girl's boyfriend, who turns out to be his erstwhile assistant.



Whose England: Anthony Hopkins, Emma Thompson

● *Kikuchi* is the first film to be produced by Vortex Japan, the production/distribution company established in 1989 by Kenchi Iwamoto and his backer, Shuichi Ohi, with the express intention of creating a new cinema and involving 'patrons' from the world of business. Iwamoto, a graduate in scriptwriting from the School of Visual Arts in Yokohama, is a well-known author/illustrator of avant-garde *manga* or comic strips. His cinematographer's background is in still photography and his lighting director comes from advertising. Contemporary music, with its ready acceptance of distorted sound, is another influence: *Kikuchi* contains no directly recorded natural sound, everything has been altered and 'layered' in post-production to create a sense of heightened awareness.

Yet Iwamoto's extremely disciplined film is far removed from either the frantic world of comic-strip action - as it tends to be thought of in the West - or from the music video, with its superficial stylishness and hyper-energetic effects. Many images are indeed familiar from our own strip art: a shot, for instance, of *Kikuchi* from behind and to one side of the frame, in his pulled-down hat, scarf and coat, with the road ahead and the object of his desire just in view. But for much of the film, Iwamoto creates a strange, completely foreign and highly sculptural space within the frame.

The laundry and the bare space of *Kikuchi*'s room, relieved only by a bed and a television, acquire a persuasive and perversely 'real' geometry. They are shot in translucent blue/white tones, colour being permitted to flood in only briefly for the sequences in the supermarket and on the bus. Iwamoto conjures a world that hovers between a bleak reality and a slim prospect of fulfilment. Sparse and oblique, this catalogue of repetitive days in the life of an almost wordless protagonist (finely played by Jiro Yoshimura) at times recalls Oshima's *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*. Iwamoto is even more reticent about the psychology of his character than Oshima. He replaces that director's sense of a psychological space with a physical one as constraining as the rectangular boxes of strip art.

In many ways, the most interesting films made in Japan since the 60s have been precisely those which work on the margins of the film industry (early Oshima, Terayama). With this film, Iwamoto follows in the footsteps of Katsuhiro Otomo, who made his own transition from *manga* to film with *Akira*, and then the live-action *World Apartment Horror*, which Iwamoto scripted. Perhaps the most interesting legacy of the *manga* is a curious obliqueness in point of view suggested by some recent titles. Films with titles like *Kuri Chan: Passion of a Potted Dwarf* Man seem to open to view a shady, stunted, hitherto unexamined world far removed from the narrative, character and genre stereotypes of so much mainstream cinema.

Verina Glaessner

Lost in Siberia

United Kingdom/USSR

Director: Alexander Mitta

Certificate

15

Distributor

Winstone

Production Companies

Spectator
Entertainment
International (London)
Mosfilm (Moscow)

Executive Producer

Benjamin Brahms

Producers

Anthony Andrews

Gagik Gasparyan

Alexander Moody

Co-producer

Anthony Sloman

Associate Producers

James Brabazon

Christopher Gawor

Production Supervisor

Vilen Mirkhanyan

Casting

ADR:

Brendan

Donnison/Lyons Inc.

Assistant Directors

Olga Kalymova

Marina Kopylova

Nadezhda Balandina

Dimitri Katin

Screenplay

Russian Version:

Alexander Mitta

Valery Fried

Yuri Korotkov

English Version:

James Brabazon

Director of Photography

Vladimir Shevtsik

Colour

Eastman Color

Camera Operator

Vladimir Bit-Bairo

Supervising Editor

Anthony Sloman

Editors

Anthony Sloman

Nadezhda Veselovskaya

Art Directors

Valery Yurkevitch

Vatili Klimenkov

Set Design

Alexei Schkelle

Yevgeni Kharitonov

Andrei Bessolitsin

Special Effects

A. Yevmina

V. Klimenkov

Music

Leonid Desyatnikov

Music Director

Sergei Skripka

Music Associate

Minna Blank

Costume Design

Tatiana Lichmanova

Dressers

L. Zhilina

M. Pazilov

Make-up

Yekaterina Ivanova

Titles/Opticals

GSE

Sound Design

Yekaterina Popova

Associate Sound Editor

Vyatcheslav Karasev

Post-production

Dialogue Supervisor

Constantine Gregory

Music Recordist

Yevgeni Nekrasov

ADR Recordist

Lionel Strutt

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

John Iles

Sound Re-recordist

Paul Carr

Consultants

Major-General P.

Mischenkov

Lieutenant-Colonel

Y. Kalinin

V. Chirikov

Y. Fidelgols

U. Naksju

I. Malski

Stunt Supervisor

S. Vorobyov

Cast

Anthony Andrews

Andrei Miller

Yelena Mayorova

Doctor Anna

Vladimir Ilyin

Captain Malakhov

Ira Mikhalyova

Lilka

Yevgeni Mironov

Volodya

Alexei Zharkov

Nikola

Valentin Galt

Beria

Alexander Bureyev

Sergeant Konyayev

Valdimir Prozorov

"Charlie"

Hark Bohm

Max Brunovich

Nikolai Pastukhov

Uncle Misha

Yuri Sherstnyov

Pashka

Nicolas Chagrin

Shah

Elena Secota

Empress

Oleg Li

General Takahishi

Naito

Albert Filozov

Lilka's Father

Natalia Gundareva

Faina

Ivan Bortnik

Faina's Husband

Zinovi Gerd

Levenson

Yuri Sokolov

Gang Leader

Alexander Glebov

One-legged Sailor

Sergei Badichkin

Young Lieutenant

Nikolai Prokopovich

NKVD General

Alexander Teplov

Pyotr Zaichenko

Mikhail Kaplun

Arnis Litsits

Interrogators

Igor Sukachov

Gap-Tooth

Leonid Timtsunik

Chilita

Yevgeni Serov

Skinny

Roman Kurdyumov

Andrei Ivanov

Slava Ilyin

Young Crooks

Mikhail Zhigalov

Wounded Traitor

Ludov Sokolova

Auntie Klava

Maria Skvortsova

Lilka's Neighbour

A. Archubasov

O. Alexandrova

O. Bannikov

Y. Balashov

V. Borodin

M. Bocharov

V. Chirikov

A. Burdo

V. Doronkin

Y. Danilovich

V. Gorbunichikov

A. Dyakonov

D. Grabbe

V. Gostev

I. Karpova

V. Ivakhnenko

V. Khalturin

I. Kayukov

Y. Kolobkov

A. Kodanov

V. Kravchenko

I. Kosukhin

A. Mikeskin

K. Labutin

B. Miralibekov

O. Mikhnev
A. Mylnikov
M. Mironova
A. Ogorodov
Y. Oborotov
A. Sazhin
A. Peskaryov
O. Shapko
A. Seleznyov
A. Shpilov

Y. Vellis
S. Vorobyov
D. Voronin
A. Zhabin
V. Zubenko

9,730 feet
108 minutes

English version

Russian title: Zatoryani v Sibiry

● At an archaeological dig on the Persian/Soviet border, just after World War II, the English archaeologist Andrei Miller makes an exciting discovery, which leads to a visit by the Shah and Empress. Though the Soviets want the area for an artillery range, the Empress persuades the Shah to let Miller carry on digging. Then he is kidnapped by Russian soldiers and taken to Moscow for interrogation. He is accused of being the grandson of a White Army general and a Western spy, and is sent to Siberia.

In the settlement, he is approached by a young girl, Lilka, who tries to trade his boots for food. Meanwhile, Captain Malakhov blackmails a doctor at the camp, Anna Ilyinishna, into becoming his mistress. Miller begins to work in the camp timber yard, and is bullied by the rest of the team. He tries to kill himself but is saved by a young prisoner, Volodya. Lilka tries to persuade Anna to take her dying father into the prison hospital ward. Miller proves his mettle by fighting back when tormented, and joins Nikola, "King of the Thieves", and another prisoner in an escape attempt.

The other two are caught and shot, but Miller remains at large, and is assumed to have betrayed them. Lilka's father dies. Miller is injured and sheltered by some peasants, before being denounced and brought back to the prison hospital. Lilka contracts typhus. When Miller recovers, he starts work as Anna's orderly, and saves Lilka from being left in the prison morgue to die. He is sentenced to a further twenty-five years for his escape, and is due to be sent to the terrible Kolyma camps, but Anna has his name removed from the list. In the bathhouse, Anna and Lilka are attacked by two prisoners but

saved by Miller. Anna and Miller's increasing closeness begins to provoke Lilka's jealousy.

Malakhov decides to marry Anna, but is informed about her relationship with Miller. Meeting in secret on a sunken barge, Anna and Miller are followed by Lilka; when Malakhov arrives, Lilka puts him off the scent. Malakhov is furious and sends Miller back to the thieves' hut, where his life will be in danger. There is a vicious fight among the prisoners, and Miller is once more sentenced to go to Kolyma. As the prisoners are being transported, Anna and Lilka leave the settlement. Volodya's nerve breaks, and he is shot. But Miller is recalled to Moscow. A campaign by the Empress of Persia has persuaded Beria to release him. At a reception organised by the Empress, Miller hallucinates that his friends from the camp are among the dancers.

● In a recent interview, Alexei Gherman, the admired director of *My Friend Ivan Lapshin*, explained his rejection of American co-production money with a joke about Jack Nicholson playing Stalin, and added: "I cannot conceive of having an American actor in a Soviet film". Other Russian directors have not proved so fastidious about casting (lesser) Anglophone stars in their films. Anthony Andrews in this Anglo-Russian co-production is to be followed by Malcolm McDowell in Karen Shakhnazarov's *The Assassination of the Tsar*, Tom Hulce as Stalin's cameraman in Andrei Konchalovsky's *The Inner Circle*, and Rupert Everett in Sergei Bondarchuk's Italo-Russian co-production of Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*. The financial imperatives behind such co-productions need no elucidation. Their artistic consequences are worth examining.

Disparity of experience, culture, understanding, language is central to *Lost in Siberia*. Miller's Englishness is not just a matter of words. His encounters with the other characters, with the girl, Lilka, who tells him that his English children's games are 'stupid', with Captain Malakhov, who expects him to grass on his fellows, even with Anna,



Apart from history: Vladimir Ilyin

the doctor he falls in love with ("At this point in another life, I'd ask you to dance"), are all predicated on a *difference* which is one of the film's more interesting preoccupations. But the gap the film documents is damagingly echoed in its own production.

The script is credited to three Russians and an Englishman. It, too, is split, between a 'Russian' story – a morally curious examination of the history of the camps – and an 'English' (Western) story – using the Gulag as the setting for a tale of violent adventure and doomed love. Unsurprisingly, in present circumstances, the Western approach wins. The adventure story is occasionally gripping, but under-imagined and increasingly predictable in its repetitious menu of brawling, violence, escapes and chase sequences. The love triangle between Miller, Anna and Malakhov takes a similarly conventional path to its sad dénouement. Lurking somewhere in the cracks of this Miller's tale is the Russian story; but since, for the most part, the Russian characters are of only episodic interest, this does not go much further than ritual invocations of Lenin and Stalin, Trotsky and Bukharin.

The same disparity is apparent in the acting. At the centre of events – indeed rarely off the screen – is the vocally and expressively dull Andrews. Supporting him are the excellent Yelena Mayorova, as Anna, and Vladimir Ilyin (Yevgeny Tsymbal's *Defence Counsel Sedov*) as Malakhov. A number of major Russian actors (Valentin Galt, appearing for two minutes as Beria, Zinovi Gerdt as a hospital patient) are glimpsed in incidental roles. What is trumpeted as the first Russian-made film to tell the truth about the Gulag becomes a film about an Englishman who was there by mistake and was released, while the humiliating exigencies of co-production reduce the Russians (who were there for a reason) to bit parts in their own story, their own history.

That their story would have been considerably more compelling is evident from the vigour and authenticity of the Russian dialogue, from the persuasiveness with which the daily rituals of camp life are observed, and above all in vignettes such as Lilka's performance of a Stalinist hymn in a 'choir' of furiously mugging deaf-mutes, or the infernal scene of convicts being crated on to the ship for Kolyma, which manage to evoke the horrific absurdity of life in Stalin's Russia.

A wooden, voice-over epigraph from Andrews, to the effect that Miller was an exception and that tens of millions of Russians were not so lucky, seems vaguely to acknowledge the film's failure to address the real issues. Some eloquently hostile Russian reviews have already expressed the sense of an opportunity betrayed. The critic of the influential paper *Nezavisimaya gazeta* complained that Russia has become a cinematic "third world". Another critic entitled her piece: "Is everything for sale?"

Julian Graffy

Meet the Feebles

New Zealand 1989

Director: Peter Jackson

Certificate

18

Distributor

Arrow Film

Production Company

Wingnut Films

Producers

Jim Booth

Peter Jackson

Production Manager

Angela Mills

Unit Manager/

Location Manager

Martin Walsh

Post-production

Supervisor

Jamie Selkirk

Assistant Director

Chris Short

Screenplay

Danny Mulherson

Frances Walsh

Stephen Sinclair

Peter Jackson

Director of Photography

Murray Milne

In colour

Camera Operator

Peter Jackson

Editor

Jamie Selkirk

Production Designer

Mike Kane

Special Effects

Steve Ingram

Puppet Design

Cameron Chittock

Supervising Puppeteers

Jonathon Acorn

Ramon Aguilar

Puppeteers

Eleanor Aitken

Carl Buckley

Sarah Glensior

Danny Mulherson

George Port

Ian Williamson

Justine Wright

Terri Anderton

Sean Ashton-Peach

Puppet Makers

Cameron Chittock

Richard Taylor

Tania Rodger

Peter Jackson

Puppet Co-ordinator

Tania Rodger

Models

Richard Taylor

Music

Peter Dasant

Songs

"Meet the Feebles"

by Peter Dasant, Fane

Flaws, Arthur Baysting,

performed by Mark

Hadlow; "Garden of

Love"; "Hot Potato"

by Peter Dasant, Fane

Flaws, Arthur Baysting,

performed by Mark

Hadlow; "Robert's

Serenade" by Peter

Dasant, Danny

Mulherson, Frances

Walsh, performed by

Mark Hadlow; "Barry's

Aria" by Peter Dasant

performed by Mark

Hadlow; "One Leg

Missing" by Peter

Dasant, Garth Frost,

performed by Fane

Flaws; "Sodomy" by

Danny Mulherson,

performed by Stuart

Devenie

Costume Design

Glenis Foster

Titles

Sue Rogers

Sound Editors

Jamie Selkirk

Eric de Beus

Sound Recordists

Neil Maddever

Grant Taylor

Music:

Neil Maddever

Armourer

Steve Ingram

Cast

Danny Mulherson

Heidi

Donna Akersten

Stuart Devenie

Mark Hadlow

Ross Jolly

Brian Sergeant

Peter Vere Jones

Mark Wright

Vocal Performances

8,701 feet

97 minutes

Twelve hours before their first live TV show, the Feebles, a puppet troupe, are busy rehearsing under their director, Sebastian the Fox. The MC, Harry the Hare, introduces the lead singer Heidi, a hippo with a weight problem. Her lover, the show's producer Bletch the Walrus, has dropped her in favour of Samantha, a sexy cat from the chorus. Robert, a naive young hedgehog, joins the troupe and falls for Lucille, a pretty seal who has also attracted the lecherous attention of Bletch's assistant, Trevor the Rat. Meanwhile, the knife-thrower Wynyard the Frog, a hopeless junkie with a Vietnam trauma, vainly begs Trevor for drugs, and Sid the depressive elephant is served with a paternity order by his ex-lover, Sandy the Chicken.

Bletch, accompanied by Trevor and the thuggish Barry the Bulldog, meets Cedric the Boar on the golf course to fix a drugs deal with Cedric's boss, Mr Big the Whale. Trevor, shooting a porno movie on the side, hits problems when

Daisy the Cow accidentally asphyxiates her partner, Wally the Cockroach. The prurient office boy, Denis the Anteater, is roped in as replacement. Harry, who has broken out in a rash, learns from Dr Quack he has The Big One – information overheard by the Fly, a gutter-press journalist.

Rehearsing her big number, Heidi is shaken by gargantuan belches that bring down the set. Rushing to Bletch for comfort, she finds him being felated by Samantha, and locks herself in her dressing-room. Trevor, having drugged Lucille's champagne, is about to rape her when Robert appears. Outraged, the hedgehog storms off before Lucille can explain. Mr Big's heroin arrives, but proves to be borax. Bletch and his minions confront the whale at the docks. Both Barry and Cedric are killed, but Bletch and Trevor escape down Mr Big's gullet and out his anus.

Thanks to the Fly, Harry's terminal illness is headlines. But when the show starts he indomitably goes on, only to vomit all over the audience. Sid, pushed on to fill in, is confronted by Sandy with their love-child. The stoned Wynyard skewers himself with his own knife. Heidi, after attempting suicide, finds one of Bletch's machine-guns and guns down Samantha, and then Harry (who has just discovered he doesn't have myxomatosis after all). Erupting on stage, she massacres most of the troupe, ending with Bletch. Trevor wounds her, but she kills him. The only survivors besides Heidi are Robert (who nobly saves Lucille), Sebastian, stage manager Arfur the Worm, and Sid and his baby. End titles tell us what became of them.

In high-concept terms, *Meet the Feebles* is easily defined: it's *The Muppets Go Sleazebag*. Aiming to do for the perky world of puppets what *Fritz the Cat* did for animation – i.e., overwhelm it with filth, sex and drugs – Peter Jackson's film sets out to be relentlessly, gratuitously offensive. Most of the time, fortunately, it succeeds.

Jackson's previous movie, the live-action *Bad Taste*, was a ramshackle SF/horror splatter comedy, blithely tossing in gags and parodies from whatever source came to hand. *Feebles* is better organised but almost equally eclectic: we get a black-and-white moody torchsong flashback, a 'Nam movie flashback (complete with Russian roulette), and – in the intercutting between Heidi's backstage slaughter and Sebastian's big production number – a parody of the baptism/bloodletting sequence from *The Godfather*.

The massacre rounds off a film in which no excuse for spurning bodily secretions – blood, pus, vomit, or whatever – is passed up. Not all the humour, though, is quite so grossly visceral, and Sebastian, the effete (and, of course, English-accented) director gets several of the best lines. "You mean it's not part of your act?" he asks testily when an Indian contortionist gets his head stuck up his arse. "Pity – we could call it *Passage to India*".

Philip Kemp

Men of Respect

USA 1990

Director: William Reilly

Certificate

18

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Companies

Central City Films/

Arthur Goldblatt

Productions/Grandview

Avenue Pictures

Executive Producers

Arthur Goldblatt

Eric Kitain

Producer

Ephraim Horowitz

Line Producer

Gary Mehlman

Associate Producers

Donna Lennard

Tia Lemke

Allen Cohen

Gregory Totland

Production

Office Co-ordinator

Maureen Kleinman

Production Manager

Louis Tancredi

Location Manager

Mark Rhodes

Casting

Pat McCorkle

Extras:

Adine Duron

Assistant Directors

Gary Sales

Robert Leveen

Dolly Hall

Fred T. Sojka

Screenplay

William Reilly

Adapted from *The*

Tragedy of Macbeth by

William Shakespeare

Director of Photography

Bobby Bukowski

In colour

Additional Photography

Director of

Photography:

Daniel Shulman

Location Manager:

Scott Hornbacher

Art Director:

Jeff Glickman

Production Assistants:

Carleen Hsu

Nelson Hume

Mitchell Dupree

Ed Stalter

Eva Papp

Gary Quallies

2nd Unit Directors

of Photography

Dan Shulman

Joseph Dell'Olio

Editor

Elizabeth Kling

Production Designer

William Barclay

Art Director

Cathy Maxey

Set Decorator

Susan Block

Set Dressers

Guy Pepin

Sarah Prescott

Catherine Tambini

Scenic Artists

Chargeman:

Joyce Liedert

Caroline Wallner

Storyboard Artist

John Moynihan

Computer Storyboards

Allen Cohen

Special Effects

Drew Jiritano

Music

Misha Segal

Additional

Orchestrations

Emilio Kauderer

Music Editor

Alex Steyermark

Costume Design

Susan Lyall

Wardrobe Supervisor

Taryn Walsh

Make-up

Cidele Curo

Theodore Mayes

Titles/Opticals

R/ Greenberg

Associates Inc

Supervising

Sound Editor

Wendy Helb

Sound Recordists

Steve Rogers

Dorielle Rogers

Sound Re-recordists

Mel Zelniker

Sound Effects Editor

Eugene Gearty

Foley

Elisha Birnbaum

Creative Consultants

John Gallagher

Harold Welb

Production Assistants

John Thorpe

Robert Hallenbake

Risa Koren

Katia Anstredt

Mitchell Dupree

Ellen Curry

Alex Petersen

Madeline Farris

Hillary Jackson

Richard Spore
Carmella
Andrei Belgrader
Aldo
Olek Krupa
Beda
Edward Gallardo
Manuel
Joseph Ragno
Padrino Ricci
Nicholas Turturro
Bingo
J. R. Nutt
Doug
Julie Garfield
Irene

Beatrice Alda
Susan
Richard Grund
Paulie
Harlan Cary Poe
Bob
Rick Washburn
Louie
Matthew Sussman
Gunman
Ed Setrakian
Dr Edwards

10,186 feet
113 minutes

Eager to prove his courage and loyalty to the D'Amico family and its 'padrino' Charlie D'Amico, Michael Battaglia, aided by loan shark Bankie Como, guns down "The Greek" and his henchmen. The next day, fleeing from possible retribution, Michael and Bankie stumble on the abode of Signora Lucia, a psychic, who predicts that Michael will himself become padrino, as will Bankie's son Philip, enjoying better fortune than his father. Michael is duly welcomed into the D'Amico fraternity as a "man of respect", and tells his wife Ruth about the psychic's prediction.

Informed that Charlie proposes to pay them a visit, Ruthie urges Michael to realise his ambition while he has the chance. That evening, Charlie announces the retirement of Rossi (who walks out) and singles out Michael for special praise. Egged on by Ruthie, who drugs Charlie's bodyguards, Michael butchers Charlie in his bed. The body is found the next morning by Duffy, who is furious, but Michael shoots the bodyguards (upon whom Ruthie has planted the murder weapon) before they can be questioned.

Michael's ascendancy is near complete, but he has visions of his demise at the hands of Bankie and his son. He arranges for their assassination, but his hit men fail to despatch Philip. At a party organised by Ruthie, Michael suffers delusions and sees Bankie jeering at him. Now taking to drink, and beset by sleeplessness, he visits Signora Lucia, who informs him that Duffy is a danger to him, but that no man born of woman can harm him. Accordingly, Michael plans to eradicate Duffy, but the car bomb kills only his wife and son.

Duffy and Rossi soon join forces, and pledge their allegiance to Charlie's elder son Mal, who returns after a period of retirement. Meanwhile, Ruthie's descent into madness is evidenced by her obsessive cleanliness and persistent sleepwalking. Before long, the D'Amico family is reasserting itself on the streets: internecine war breaks out. Ruthie commits suicide, while Duffy, informing Michael that his mother was dead by the time he was taken from her womb, kills him. Mal welcomes Philip into the family as a man of respect.

William Reilly's directorial debut transposes *Macbeth* to the world of the New York Mafia, exploring the competing claims of honour and brotherhood and overriding personal

ambition. It is more than just the names (Bankie/Banquo, Rossi/Ross, Duffy/Macduff, Mal/Malcolm) that connect the two: in tone and visual style, the film translates the darkness and ferocity of the Shakespearean model. But Reilly seems to have overlooked a fundamental discrepancy between his narrative and its source. For where in the original the restoration of Malcolm signals a return to the order and stability represented by the house of Duncan, the only certainty here is that the cycle of violence will continue (sufficient hint is given that Philip Como has ambitions of his own). With no sense of the purgation of evil, the story is rendered meaningless in moral terms.

Earlier screen versions of *Macbeth* have identified the double aspect of the plot: it is at once a horror story of the supernatural and a psychological thriller in which a vulnerable husband is spurred on by his forceful wife. Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* and Polanski's *Macbeth*, albeit in different styles, convey both these aspects. But Reilly succeeds only in communicating the latter. This is because *noir* ingredients are more easily accommodated in a Mafia film than horror elements: dressed in black, Ruthie is a *femme fatale* driving her victim to murder and self-betrayal, as the darkness slowly closes in on them (*Double Indemnity* springs to mind).

Signora Lucia, on the other hand, is a bizarre and wholly unconvincing eccentric, surrounded by equally odd deviants, none of them as terrifying as they ought to be. Ultimately, the only level on which the film works is that of gangster movie, a genre inappropriate (as demonstrated by Ken Hughes' *Joe Macbeth*) to Shakespearean tragedy. *Men of Respect* lacks sophistication, due largely to a script which, when not laughable ("Charlie is history; soon he'll be geography"), is just dull. In trying to accommodate the 'magic' of the original, Reilly can only find feeble modern equivalents. The prediction regarding Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane becomes a prophecy that Michael will be safe until the stars fall from heaven - which they do, in the form of fireworks, on the night of his climactic slaughter.

Alan Taylor



Sticking point: John Turturro, Dennis Farina

Naked Lunch

United Kingdom/Canada 1991

Director: David Cronenberg

Certificate
18
Distributor
First Independent
Production Companies
Recorded Picture
Company (London)/
Naked Lunch
Productions (Toronto)
With the participation
of Téléfilm Canada/
Ontario Film
Development
Corporation/Film
Trustees Limited/
Nippon Film
Development &
Finance, Inc./Pierson
Heldring & Pierson
Producer
Jeremy Thomas
Co-producer
Gabriella Martinelli
Production
Co-ordinator
Deborah Zwicker
Production Manager
Marilyn Stonehouse
Location Manager
Michael Brownstone
Post-production
Supervisor
Michael Saxton
Post-production
Co-ordinators
Sandra Tucker
Michael Rea
Casting
Extras:
Elinor Lavender
Interzone Extras:
Youssef Abdelnour
Assistant Directors
John Board
Terry Gould
Simon Board
Screenplay
David Cronenberg
Based on the novel by
William S. Burroughs
Director of Photography
Peter Suschitzky
In colour
Camera Operator
Peter Suschitzky
Steadicam Operator
Ted Churchill
Editor
Ron Sanders
Production Designer
Carol Spiers
Art Director
James McAteer
Set Decorator
Elinor Rose Galbraith
Lead Set Dresser
Clive Thomasson
Set Dressers
Peter Nicolakakos
Arlindo Vincente
Gareth Wilson
John Morrison
Paula Deresti
Key Scenic Artist
John Bannister
Scenic Artists
Janet Cormack
Otto Fondan
Jak Oliver
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Jim Isaac
Special Creatures/
Effects
Chris Walas, Inc
Floor Special Effects
Ted Ross
CWI Crew
General Manager:
Mark Walas
Project Supervisor:
James Isaac
Mechanical Supervisor:
Kelly Lepowski
Painting Supervisor:
Gregg Olsson
Mould Supervisor:
Wim Van Thillo

Technical Adviser:
Jon Berg
Designer:
Stephan Dupuis
Music/Music Director
Howard Shore
Orchestrations
Homer Dennison
Music Performed by
The London
Philharmonic
Orchestra
Alto Saxophone Solos:
Ornette Coleman
Music Supervisor
Ray Williams
Music Editor
Suzana Peric
Songs
"Vaya Con Dios" by
Russell, James, Pepper,
performed by Les Paul,
Mary Ford; "Write
Man", "Bugpowder",
"Ballad", Intersong"
by Ornette Coleman,
performed by The
Ornette Coleman
Trio; "Mysterioso"
by Thelonious Monk;
"Midnight Sunrise"
by Ornette Coleman,
performed by Ornette
Coleman, The Master
Musicians of Jajouka
Costume Design
Denise Cronenberg
Costume Supervisor
Brenda Gilles
Make-up Artist
Christine Hart
Title Design
Balsmeyer & Everett
End Credits
Film Effects
Sound Editors
Wayne Griffin
Richard Cadger
Tony Currie
Dale Sheldrake
Sound Recordists
Bryan Day
Music:
Allan Snelling
Foley Recordist
Lou Solakofski
Sound Re-recordists
Peter Maxwell
Don White
David Appleby
Sound Transfers
Sound Mix Ltd
Sound Effects Editors
David Evans
Jane Tattersall
Foley Artist
Andy Malcolm
Office Production
Assistant
Stephen Scott
Stand-ins
John Picard
Hélène Leblanc
Wranglers
Insect/Centipede:
James Lovisek
Animal:
Rick Parker

Cast
Peter Weller
Bill Lee
Judy Davis
Joan Frost/Joan Lee
Ian Holm
Tom Frost
Julian Sands
Yves Cloquet
Roy Scheider
Dr Benway
Monique Mercure
Fadela
Nicholas Campbell
Hank
Michael Zelniker
Martin
Robert A. Silverman
Hans

Joseph Scorsiani
Kiki
Peter Boretski
Creature Voices
Yuval Daniel
Hafid
John Friesen
Hauser
Sean McCann
O'Brien
Howard Jerome
A.J. Cohen
Michael Caruana
Pawnbroker
Kurt Reis
Peter Boretski
Justin Louis

Julian Richings
Exterminators
Jim Yip
The Chink
Claude Affalo
Forgeman
Laurent Hazout
Joe Dimambro
Interzone Boys
Ornette Coleman
Denardo Coleman
Barre Phillips
The Ornette Coleman
Trio

10,386 feet
115 minutes

New York, 1953. Bill Lee, employed as a bug exterminator, runs out of powder on a job, and finds his wife Joan injecting it as a narcotic. Believing it might help his writing, Lee tries the powder on himself. He is picked up by two narcotics cops, who mock him by leaving him alone with a pile of the powder and a giant beetle. To the horrified Bill, this reveals a talking anus, which tells him that Joan is an alien agent from Interzone, a free port on the North African coast. A fellow exterminator suggests that Bill consult a drug specialist, Dr Benway, who gives him some black powder made from giant centipede meat as a potential antidote.

Stoned on a combination of these drugs, Bill returns home to find Joan in company with two aspiring writer friends, Hank and Martin. Barely noticing that Hank is attempting sex with Joan, Bill suggests he and his wife perform their 'William Tell routine'. Joan places a glass on her head, Bill shoots at it and (apparently accidentally) kills her. Taking refuge in a bar frequented by homosexuals, Bill is introduced by Kiki, a seductive young man, to a repulsive creature known as a Mugwump. The latter suggests that Bill head for Interzone where he should compose his reports on a Clark-Nova typewriter, and hands him his travel ticket. Bill finds himself in an exotic city where he is approached by a German, Hans, who wants to sell him the black meat drug. In his room, the Clark-Nova mutates into another talking beetle, which urges Bill to employ homosexuality as a cover.

Kiki reappears and takes him to a party to meet an American literary couple, Tom and Joan Frost. Tom offers to loan Bill his Martinelli typewriter, and tells him that he knows Bill killed his wife (who is identical to Mrs Frost). In Bill's room, his Clark-Nova physically attacks the Martinelli for being an enemy agent, and then tells Bill to seduce Joan and find the source of the black meat production. Bill visits Joan, and they begin to make love while creating erotic literature on an Arabic typewriter, but the sinister housekeeper Fadela intervenes and destroys the machine. Joan vanishes, and Bill's Clark-Nova tells him that his wife was transformed from a centipede into an agent working for Fadela. Hank and Martin pay a visit, revealing to Bill his true junkie life style, and urge him to finish the book called *Naked Lunch* that he has, unbeknownst to himself, been sending



Dangerous liaisons: Peter Weller

to them. Kiki takes pity on Bill and introduces him to the pleasures of the juice secreted by Mugwumps.

Bill begins writing again on a Mugwriter typewriter, which tells him to seduce a decadent European. Cloquet, in order to reach Benway. Kiki arranges a meeting, and Bill sacrifices the boy to Cloquet's consuming embrace as possible bait. Bill then visits Tom and exchanges the Mugwriter for his old Clark-Nova, which tells him that Fadela is based at Hans' old factory, which is a warehouse filled with chained-up Mugwumps. Bill finds Joan captive there as part of Fadela's lesbian work force, but Fadela herself turns out to be Dr Benway in disguise. He asks Bill to help him work the drug racket in the state of Annexia. Bill agrees if he can take Joan, whom he says he needs in order to write. Bill arrives at the border of Annexia, and is asked for proof of his profession as a writer. He tells Joan to perform the 'William Tell routine', and again the shot proves fatal.

David Cronenberg has described his 'adaptation' of Burroughs' book as if he and the author had ventured into *The Fly*'s telepod together and produced an unexpected hybrid. This is not any kind of direct transposition of an intangible and hallucinatory text, but a film structured on the act of writing itself, with fictional narcotics as a guiding factor and the biography of Burroughs as an anecdotal reference point. Interzone is no longer the junkies' haven of Tangiers – location filming was prevented at the last moment by the Gulf War – but a studio creation of an interior world, sliding from Moroccan market stalls to hotel rooms looking surrealistically out to views of Central Park. Aside from a few absurd monologues – regarding an Isadora Duncan-style death by a scarf

of trailing haemorrhoids and a man blessed with a talking asshole – there is little in the script that is recognisably drawn from Burroughs' text, and the explosive comic creation Dr Benway (enacted by Burroughs himself in a memorable BBC *Arena* programme) has been transformed into the cameo role of another sinister, power-crazed scientist from the Cronenberg universe.

Homosexuality has never been to the fore in Cronenberg's cinema (the lesbian Barbara Steele character in *Shivers* a notable exception), and the outrageous homoerotic elements in Burroughs have been awkwardly muted. Peter Weller's intensely internalised performance, while maintaining a drolly stoned tone, barely registers any impact of the 'gayness within' stimulated by the unrepressed environment of Interzone. Instead, the figure of Joan, played with a disturbing edge of self-destruction by Judy Davis, fulfils the Romantic role of literary muse. The 'William Tell routine' that did in fact cause the death of Burroughs' wife is used by Cronenberg to send his hero more on a guilt trip than a drug-induced one.

Bringing in with the Frost couple the parallel destructive relationship between Paul and Jane Bowles (with Judy Davis double cast, and even suggesting a more identifiable Kit Moresby than Debra Winger in *The Sheltering Sky*), Cronenberg is far more interested in obsessively replaying his favourite theme of the irreconcilable differences between man and woman. The only homosexual act directly visualised is the shock effect of the oily Cloquet (Julian Sands finally finding his true niche) becoming one with the fey Kiki amid a welter of Chris Walas gunk. This is probably the most extreme image Cronenberg has yet given us of the physicality of sexual union. The fact that it

plays as a fearful warning to Lee only emphasises the distancing from Burroughs' warped hedonism.

Where the film is both successful and frustrating is in its parallels with *Videodrome*, with the most dangerously repressed of our impulses again confronted through hallucination. In place of the physically alive videocassettes and television sets of the earlier film are the talking typewriters – the means to creating our fantasies that become ends in themselves. Where *Videodrome* was so fruitful and disturbing was in the way it played with voyeurism in a voyeuristic medium. In *Naked Lunch*, Cronenberg has wisely rejected any clichéd attempt to show the creative process directly (no screwed-up paper in the wastebasket à la Zimmerman's *Julia*), and through the narcotic state fused all of human, animal and mechanical life. But the problem also arises of maintaining narrative coherence when a base reality is lost.

While the studio sets are consistently stylised, some of the effects work is not as persuasive as in, say, *The Fly*, and the Mugwumps look perilously close to intergalactic extras from *The Empire Strikes Back*. In particular, the crafted visual surface characteristic of Cronenberg's work is disrupted about half-way through when a very artificial sex-blob (a kind of giant centipede) falls on the adulterous Bill and Joan Frost. The effect is unhelpfully comic rather than alarmingly cosmic. *Naked Lunch* is unquestionably a brave and ingenious solution to an impossible task of adaptation, and its surface fascinations and weird humour mainly compensate for the lack of narrative drive. If its virtues lie in its vices, then the dangerous liaison between Cronenberg's vices and Burroughs' was simply too much for any one feature film to contain. *David Thompson*

Rebecca's Daughters

United Kingdom/Germany 1991

Director: Karl Francis

Certificate 12	Sound Re-recorder Edward Bazalgette
Distributor Mayfair Entertainment/ Palace Pictures	Foley Pauline Griffiths Jenny Lee Wright
Production Companies Rebecca's Daughters Ltd (London)/Astralma Erste Filmproduktions (Munich)/ Delta Film (Berlin) In association with BBC Wales	Stunts Maria Bisset Neil Denver Davies Steve Dent Tracy Eddon Terry Forrestall Bob Ogilvie Steve Whymant
With the participation of British Screen	Armourer Mark Shelley
Executive Producers Ruth Caleb Faramarz Ettehadieh Gert Oberdorfer	Cast Peter O'Toole Lord Sarn Paul Rhys Anthony Raine/Rebecca Joely Richardson Rhianon Keith Allen Davy Simon Dornandy Captain Marsden Dafydd Hywel Rhodri Sue Roderick Sarah Hughes Huw Ceredig Mordecai Thomas Desmond Barritt Jack Wet Eiry Palfrey Mrs Wet William Lawford Footman Gwenllian Davies Sara Jane Clive Morrison Sir Henry Ray Gravell Jonah Jack Walters William Hughes Brimley Jenkins Sir Neil Watkyn Peter Hugo Daly Del Neil Caple Tel Donna Edwards Bessy Robert Blythe Sergeant Bridges Robin Davies Idris Evans Alan Devlin Lord Waterstone Bernard Latham Sir James Penfold Richard Davies Lewis Robert Grayson Colonel Porter Lucy Jenkins Maid Stella King Pig Lady Menna Trussler Old Lady with Teapot Captain Jim Bowden Kay Davies Joanna Griffiths Les Hall Lynwen Hobbs Ken Jones Leon McKeon Abraham Roberts Angela Rowe Hubert Smith Trevor Sprout Dennis Thomas Helen Thomson
Unit Manager BBC: Keith Hutton Location Manager Leighton Davies Costing Suzie Korel Assistant Directors Dafydd Arwyn Jones Ian Kroch Geoff Skelding Nic Jeune Screenplay Guy Jenkin Based on the screenplay by Dylan Thomas Additional material by Karl Francis. Guy Jenkin Director of Photography Russ Walker In colour Camera Operator Roger Pugh Evans Editor Roy Sharman Production Designer Ray Price Special Effects Martin Geeson Dave Havard Music Rachel Portman Music Directors David Snell Hayden James Choreography Lucy Fawcett Philippa Waite Costume Design Mechael Taylor Make-up Design Marina Monios Title Design Louise Hillam Opticals Les Latimer Sound Editor Geoff North ADR Paul Carr Foley Editor Michael Redfern Sound Recorder John Hayward Music: Keith Grant Dolby stereo	8,693 feet 97 minutes

Pembroke, Wales, 1943. Returning home from his army posting in India, Anthony Raine is disappointed by the cool welcome he receives from his childhood sweetheart Rhi- ▶



Gainsborough regained: Peter O'Toole

◀annon and shocked by the hostility of local farmers and labourers protesting at unfair toll-gate charges. Headed by Rhiannon's father, the domineering and permanently inebriated Lord Sarn, a money-grasping group of gentry calling themselves the Whitman Turnpike Trust are responsible for the tolls. Anthony, who is a board member by inheritance, fails to persuade them to mend their ways, but he is inspired by minister Mordecai's sermon quoting Genesis to the effect that "The seed of Rebecca's daughters shall possess the gate of their enemies".

He disguises himself as 'Rebecca', fearless leader of a band of 'daughters' (the local menfolk, also dressed in women's clothing and black-face), and begins to wage a campaign against the toll-gates. Their exploits swiftly become legend. To set a trap for this new 'hero', Lord Sarn hosts a masked ball. Anthony declines to attend, but turns up as Rebecca and whisks Rhiannon upstairs, revealing his true identity. Sarn, believing he has cornered his foe, bursts into the room, only to find Anthony proposing to his daughter.

Sarn brings in an English regiment to quell the disturbances, but their commander Captain Marsden's efforts at apprehending Rebecca prove fruitless. He dresses up as the mysterious rebel and, luring the daughters into an ambush, forces the real Rebecca to give himself away. While the Englishmen give chase, Rhiannon dons the Rebecca disguise and leads the villagers in a diversionary attack, whereupon news comes from Westminster that the troops are to be withdrawn. The Trust collapses, and the townspeople rejoice.

● The initial project of poet Dylan Thomas' association with Sydney Box at Gainsborough Pictures, *Rebecca's Daughters* was the first of three screenplays written for the studio in 1948, and the only one so far to have come to fruition. It joins *The Doctor and the Devils*, the Burke and Hare script acquired by the Rank Organisation a year earlier, and eventually directed by Freddie Francis in 1985, as another belated entry in the Thomas filmography.

Inevitably, the poet's own authorial imprint has been overlaid many times during the film's lengthy gestation.

Producer Chris Sievernich, whose credits include several films by Wenders and Chris Petit as well as John Huston's *The Dead*, had unsuccessfully tried to set up the project in the late 80s, approaching various distinguished directors before Karl Francis came on board and BBC Wales became involved.

At first sight, the end result seems light years removed from the typical Gainsborough period melodrama. Splattered in Pembrokeshire mud, these historical events have become the stuff of knockabout romp, with rumbustious Celtic humour (low enough to include a gag predicated on the Welsh peasant's sexual familiarity with his sheep) played against the pantomime foppishness of the English and the landed gentry (with his eye make-up, beauty spot and exaggerated state of intoxication, Peter O'Toole's performance is more ugly sister than snarling patriarch). Francis' track record of gritty realism and political commitment, from *Giro City* to the Northern Irish drama *Boy Soldier*, certainly sits rather uneasily with the fervent emotionalism of *The Man in Grey* or *The Wicked Lady*, even if Joely Richardson's athletic Rhiannon echoes the open-air vigour of a Margaret Lockwood.

That said, *Rebecca's Daughters* is fascinating for the way it uses its historical setting to explore contemporary issues. Just as the Gainsborough costume dramas hinted at the wartime changes in the position of women, Francis' film keys into the controversy over private monopolies within the public service sector. The tension between tradition and progress is, of course, a central theme in British cinema, and here – although ultimately Westminster remains the seat of power and the film ends with a restorative dynastic marriage – the fact remains that a band of unruly Welsh peasants in cahoots with enlightened members of the upper class (all dressed as black women) win a fleeting triumph against the English military. Racial stereotyping notwithstanding, this is nothing less than a full-scale colonial revolt and, considering the vintage of Thomas' original screenplay, a remarkably timely reflection of today's devolution/independence debate.

Trevor Johnston

Ricochet

USA 1991

Director: Russell Mulcahy

Certificate
18
Distributor
First Independent
Production Companies
Summit Productions
A Silver Picture
production
Executive Producer
Barry Josephson
Producers
Joel Silver
Michael Levy
Co-producers
James Herbert
Suzanne Todd
Production Office
Co-ordinator
Anna Zappia
Production Manager
James Herbert
Location Manager
George McDowell
Post-production Supervisor
Richard Mirisch
2nd Unit Director
Charles Picerni
Casting
Extras:
Central Casting
Frank Warren
Voice:
Barbara Harris
Assistant Directors
David Sardi
Robert Leveon
Daniel G. Silverberg
Screenplay
Steven E. De Souza

Story
Fred Dekker
Menno Meyjes
Director of Photography
Peter Levy
In colour
Plate Photography Supervisor
Glenn Campbell
Camera Operators
Krishna Rao
B:
Mark O'Kane
Steadicam Operator
Mark O'Kane
Video/Graphic Displays
Video Image
Rhonda C. Gunner
Richard E. Hollander
Gregory L. McMurtry
John C. Wash
Co-ordinator:
David M. Hofflich
Crew:
Fred Donelson
Scott Giegler
Greg Kozikowski
Scott Peterson
Monte Swann
Special Visual Effects
Available Light
Visual Effects Supervisor
John T. Van Vliet
Opticals
Available Light
Supervisor:
Beverly Bernacki
Editor
Peter Honess
Production Designer
Jay Hinkle
Art Director
Christiaan Wagener
Set Design
Eric Orborn
Set Decorators
Richard Goddard
Sam Gross
Set Dresser
Mike Rutgard
Illustrator
Peter Ramsey
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Mike Meinardus
Special Effects
Greg Curtis
Robert S. Henderson

George M. Zamora
Music/Music Director
Alan Silvestri
Additional Orchestrations
Bill Ross
Supervising Music Editor
Ken Karman
Music Editor
Jacqueline Tager
Songs
"Automatic" by Brock Walsh, Mark Goldenberg, performed by The Pointer Sisters; "I Love Your Smile" by Narada Michael Walden, Shanice Wilson, Sylvester Jackson, Jarvis La Rue Baker, performed by Shanice Wilson; "Chic Mystique" by Nile Rodgers, Bernard Edwards, Princessa, performed by Chic; "Mind Over Matter", "Ricochet" by and performed by Ice T; "Tuff Enuff" by Kim Wilson, performed by The Fabulous Thunderbirds; "Makin' Happy" by Crystal Waters, Neal Conway, Mark Harris, performed by Crystal Waters; "You Better Mind", "Oh Freedom" performed by The Saint John's Methodist Church Gospel Choir; "Next 2 Me" by and performed by Donald D.; "Killer" by Adam Tinley, Seal, performed by Seal
Costume Designer
Marilyn Vance-Straker
Special Costume Designs
Vicki Maier
Costume Supervisors
Maritza L. Garcia
Frank Perry Rose Jnr
Costumers
Antoinette Squeo
Set Women:
Stephanie Colin
Men:
Michael J. Vogt
Make-up Artists
Scott H. Eddo
Edna Sheen
Additional:
Brad Wilder
Greg LaCava
Titles
Greenberg & Schluter
Supervising Sound Editor
Martin Maryska
Sound Editors
Allen Hartz
David A. Arnold
Ed Callahan
John "Bob" Newlan
Sukey Fontelieu
Jim Matheny
Victor Grodecki
David Kulczycki
Supervising ADR Editor
Kimberly Harris-Rivoli
ADR Editors
Beth Bergeron
Renee Tondelli
Supervising Foley Editor
Christopher Flick
Foley Editors
Mark Pappas
Laura Graham
Zack Davis
Sound Recordists
Ed Novick
Matt Patterson
Music:
Dennis Sands

ADR Recordists
Bob Deschaine
David Jobe
Foley Recordist
Greg Orloff
Sound Re-recordists
Kevin O'Connell
Rick Kline
Sound Effects
Patricio Libenson
Foley Artists
Dan O'Connell
Alicia Stevenson
Special Effects
Technical Consultant
Al Disarro
Police Technical Advisers
Art Fransen
Jay Bressler
Production Assistants
Michael S. Carroll
Laura Lee Kasten
Lydell Cheshire
Greg Kovan
Phillip Ross Kessel
Michael Berly
Lesa Shapiro
Michele Shuman
John Himmelstein
Stunt Co-ordinator
Charles Picerni
Stunts
Danny Aiello III
Pete Antico
Robert Apisa
Bob Arnold
Ken Bates
Sandy Beruman
Janet Brady
Nick Brett
Charlie Brewer
John Centiempo
Alex Chapman
George Cheung
Thomas Dewie
Kenny Endoso
Frank Ferrara
James Halty
Norman Howell
Kim Koscki
Michael Maresco
Gary Morgan
Alan Olney
Jimmy Ortega
Noon Orsatti
Elam Ousaun
Victor Paul
Charles Picerni Jnr
Paul Picerni
Steve Picerni
Thomas Rosales Jnr
Tierre Turner
Axl Wolf
Pilots
Chuck Tamburro
John Santini

Cast
Denzel Washington
Nick Styles
John Lithgow
Earl Talbot Blake
Ice T
Odessa
Kevin Pollak
Larry Doyle
Lindsay Wagner
Priscilla Brimleigh
Mary Ellen Trainor
Gail Wallens
Josh Evans
Kim
Victoria Dillard
Alice
John Amos
Reverend Styles
John Cuthran Jnr
Farris
Linda Don
Wanda

● Rookie cop Nick Styles' daring arrest of psychopathic gunman Earl Talbot Blake impresses district attorney Priscilla Brimleigh, who promotes him first to detective and then to assistant district attorney, by which time Nick is married to Gail and has two young daughters. In prison, Blake, a member of the neo-fascist Aryan Brotherhood, observes Styles' rise and vows vengeance. He plans an escape in which the police will find a body they

Matt Landers
Chief Floyd
Lydell M. Cheshire
R.C.
Starletta Dupois
Mrs Styles
Sherman Howard
Kiley
Vivika Davis
Debbie
Kimberly Natasha Ali
Lisa Styles
Aileaha Jones
Monica Styles
Jesse Ventura
Chewalski
Rick Cramer
Jesse
Miguel Sandoval
Vaca
Carlos Lacamara
Luis
Don Perry
Book Man
Tom Finnegan
Desk Sergeant
Christopher A. Young
Locker Room Cop
Mark Phelan
Prison Doctor
Hugh Dane
Prison Guard
Albie Selznick
Blake's Lawyer
Frank Miller
Parole Board Chairman
Betty Carvalho
Board Member
Susan Campos
Channel 6 Reporter
Leonard O. Turner
Committee Chairman
Anita Barone
Waitress
Joe Crumney
Disc Jockey
Irene Forrest
Cleaning Woman
Holly Kaplan
Connie
Michele Landry
Teleten Worker
Heidi Thomas
Robert M. Steinberg
Susan Lentini
Cylk Cozart
James Ishida
Lisa Jo Hunter
Lisa Nelson
Kirsten Blakemore
Reporters
Ivan E. Roth
City Hall Worker
John Rubinow
ER Doctor
Tim De Zarn
Skinhead
Charles Neville
Quincy Adams Jnr
André Dukes
Odessa's Men
George Christy
Talk Show Host
K. Todd Freeman
Talk Show Guest
Marjorie Bransfield
Secretary

9,208 feet
102 minutes

believe to be Blake's.

Meanwhile, Styles is working on an inner city rejuvenation scheme at Twin Towers. While attending a telethon to raise money for the scheme, Gail receives a call from the babysitter Debbie about a power cut. Disguised as a man from the power company, Blake gets into the house and drugs Debbie and the children. He shoots a video of himself wielding an axe over the bed of the sleeping girls, which then falls into Styles' hands. Styles receives a phone call from the police informing him that his campaign manager Farris has been found dead and in drag. A suicide note incriminates Styles in child pornography. He is suspended, and later kidnapped by Blake, who injects him with heroin and shoots an incriminating video of him with a prostitute.

Still dazed, Styles is dumped in the forecourt of the courthouse. Detective Kiley does not believe his account of the kidnap and Brimleigh is also sceptical. Attempting to prove his story with the video of Blake, Styles discovers that it has been replaced by one of himself with the prostitute. This, corroborated by a medical examination which reveals Styles to have contracted VD, shakes Gail's faith in him. Styles decides to nail Blake alone. To lure him out of hiding, Styles leaves his wife and children with his childhood friend Odessa, a crack dealer. He then climbs on to the crack house roof and threatens suicide. When he sees Styles on television, Blake fears he will be cheated of his revenge. The two men confront each other on the tower and Blake is eventually pushed to his death, impaled on a metal spike.

● *Ricochet* is a cynical contribution to the current cycle of superviolent ghetto films targeted specifically at a young male black audience. The script allows viewers to have their cake and eat it by deploying a *Cosby* Show-style fantasy of black success in the rise of rookie cop Styles to the status of assistant DA, while relishing the spectacle of its destruction at the hands of white psychopath Blake. A clutch of other, clearly Hispanic villains are quickly despatched early on.

The embryonic notion of two men bound together by an all-consuming obsession is never explored by director Mulcahy, who instead seems over-keen to flaunt his populist credentials. Predictably, it is copies of *War and Peace* and the Bible that neo-Nazi Blake uses as a splint while in prison, and books are employed as body armour for the samurai of Blake's Aryan Brotherhood. To grind the message home, Blake shoots down the elderly and bemused prison librarian during his escape. Equally depressing is the way extreme and random violence is used to pad out poor characterisation and uninspired dialogue. In Mulcahy's frequently clumsy hands, the excessiveness of the wounds inflicted (at one point Styles' arm is impaled on a spike from which he withdraws it, apparently without effect) becomes merely risible.

Verina Glaessner

Scorchers

USA 1991

Director: David Beaird

Certificate

18

Distributor

Rank

Production Companies

Goldcrest Films/
FilmWorks

Executive Producers

John Quesed

Richard Becker

John La Violette

Producers

Morrie Eisenman

Richard Hellman

Co-producer

Steven J. Wolfe

Production Executive

Pamela Levinson

Production Co-ordinator

Margi Newquist

Production Manager

Steven J. Wolfe

Location Manager

Gerard Sellers

Casting

David Cohn

Associate:

Gayle Sellars

Extras Louisiana:

Miriam Fontenot

Additional Extras:

Richard Castleman

Assistant Directors

Robin Oliver

Nilo Otero

Screenplay

David Beaird

Director of Photography

Peter Deming

In colour

2nd Unit

Camera Operator

Phill

Editors

David Garfield

Additional:

David Blewitt

Production Designer

Bill Eigenbrodt

Art Directors

A. Rosalind Crew

Louisiana:

Joanne Schmidt

Set Design

Doug Goheen

Set Decorator

A. Rosalind Crew

Key Set Dresser

Rosslyn S. Bernard

Lead Scenic Artist

Felisa Finn

Scenic Artist

Scott B. Dietz

Music

Carter Burwell

Music Extract

"Symphony No. 5

Adagio" by Gustav

Mahler, performed

by the Budapest

Festival Orchestra

Music Supervisor

Gregg Hoffman

Music Editor

Adam Smalley

Songs

"Les Flammes d'enfer"

(traditional), "Tit

Galop pour Mamou"

by Dewey Balfa,

"Bayou Teche" by

Nathan Abshire, "Jolie

Blonde" (traditional),

"La Louisiane" by Steve

LeFleur, performed

by Mamou

Costume Design

Heidi Kaczinski

Costume Supervisor

Lisa Grace Erndt

Faye Dunaway's

Costumer

Bernadene C. Morgan

Make-up

Key:

Felicity Bowring

Faye Dunaway:

Frances Mathias

Key Louisiana:

Martha Preciado

Supervising

Sound Editors

Richard E. Yawn

Gordon Ecker

Sound Editors

John Leveque

John Kwiatkowski

Hector Gika

Anthony Milch

Supervising ADR Editor

Becky Sullivan

Supervising Foley Editor

Scott D. Jackson

Foley Editor

Shawn Sykora

Sound Recordists

Walt Martin

Larry Hoki

Additional:

Skip Godwin

ADR Recorrist

Doc Kane

Foley Recorrist

Gary Hecker

Dolby stereo

Supervising Sound

Re-recorrist

Jeffrey Perkins

Sound Re-recorrist

Eric Gotthelf

Sound Effects

Co-ordinators

John Michael Fanaris

Blake Marion

Sound Effects

Gary Bluffer

Production Assistants

Mindi Horwitch

Graham Jones

Jennifer Page Norian

Laura Pickard

Howard Roth

Dean Whitehead

Susan Vercelli

Louisiana:

Paul Heiman

Karen LaCorgne

Michael Johnson

Adelita Solorzano

Art Department:

Jeff Hall

Stand-ins

Nigel Gibbs

Mark Marosi

Cast

Faye Dunaway

Thais

Denholm Elliott

Howler

James Earl Jones

Bear

Emily Lloyd

Splendid

Jennifer Tilly

Talbot

James Wilder

Dolan

Anthony Geary

Preacher

Leland Crooke

Jumper

Luke Perry

Ray Ray

Kevin Michael Brown

Sugar Cat

Michael Covert

Pie Boy

Saxon Trainor

Renee

Steve LeFleur

Jonno Frishberg

Joe Fontenot

Kevin Sonnier

Band Members

Patrick Warburton

Balford

Carter Burwell

Piano Player

Myra Paci

Theresa

Jeff Moore

Bar Patron

72,366 feet

82 minutes

● In the town of Bayou Le Teche, Jumper, a middle-aged Cajun, awaits the arrival of the preacher so that the marriage of his daughter Splendid to Dolan can proceed. The preacher is at that moment enjoying the favours of the local prostitute, Thais, but the ceremony eventually takes place, followed by a celebration at Jumper's house. As the revellers say goodnight, they are heartened by the sound of Splendid's cries from within the house - which stem in fact from her fear of the matrimonial bed.

Across town, Bear and Howler are having their customary drunken debates in the Tiger café. Howler, an English ex-stage actor, refuses to tell Bear, owner of the Tiger, why he gave up his theatre career. They are soon joined by Thais, another Tiger regular. While Splendid continues to resist making love to her new husband, the preacher's daughter, Talbot, resolves to find out why her six-month marriage has failed to ignite sexually. Knowing that her husband visits Thais, she angrily confronts the latter.

Talbot is mortified to discover that her father as well as her husband enjoy the prostitute's company. Eventually Thais persuades Talbot that it is her attitude towards sex - a duty rather than a pleasure - which has turned her husband against her. Meanwhile, Splendid reveals that her fear of sex stems from the fact that her mother died in childbirth, a phobia reinforced by her father's puritanical attitudes. As dawn breaks, Splendid and Dolan retire to bed, and Talbot goes home to embrace her husband with new-found passion.

● In adapting his own stage play for the screen, David Beaird makes a determined effort to go 'movie' by combining the most agile panaglide camera since Michael Myers slithered into town in *Halloween* with editing which yanks the audience to and fro between Splendid's wedding and Bear's edge-of-town bar. Unfortunately, far from opening the play out satisfactorily, the excess of movement jars fatally with its intimate subject matter. Any modicum of interest *Scorchers* arouses with its Cajun setting is quickly dissipated by the sheer monotony of Beaird's direction.

Scorchers' most telling failure, however, is its insultingly narrow and extremely dated perspective on its dual sexual dilemma: Splendid's fear of sex (stemming from her mother's death in childbirth), and Talbot's inability to accept sex beyond the bounds of what she perceives to be the duty of a good wife. It soon becomes clear that the former is sublimating her father's guilt over her mother's death, while the latter is being coerced into giving up the madonna role for the whore simply because both her father and husband feel it necessary to sleazify their women before enjoying their fleshy pleasures. Appropriately, the climactic couplings are more redolent of a steamy deodorant ad than the psychosexual catharsis that was intended.

Farrah Anwar

Time Will Tell

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Declan Lowney

Certificate

15

Distributor

Theatrical Experience

Production Company

Initial Film & Television

For Visual Arts &

Polygram Video

International

Island Visual Arts

Executive Producers

Neville Garrick

Malcolm Gerrie

Producer

Rocky Oldham

Associate Producer

Chris Phipps

Production

Co-ordinator

Alison Hughes

Animation

Sue Young

Editors

Peter Bensimon

Tim Thornton-Allan

Songs

"Time Will Tell",

"Survival",

"Revolution", "Exodus",

"Trenchtown Rock",

"Concrete Jungle",

"Burnin' & Lootin',

"Forever Loving Jah",

"I Shot the Sheriff",

"Lively Up Yourself",

"So Much Trouble",

"Ambush In the Night",

"Running Away",

"Jammin'", "Easy

7,986 feet

89 minutes

● Bob Marley's legacy has been far less enthusiastically milked than many another deceased pop star's. In this, Island Records have shown commendable respect for the memory of their greatest act. But then Marley's tragically early death in 1981 - after a toe injury sustained playing football in London became cancerous - obviously lacks the self-destructive glamour usually associated with the deaths of rock stars. There was clearly room then for a film about Marley; in fact, there is still room for another one.

As far as it goes, *Time Will Tell* is an honest and useful document, including performances of twenty-three songs, filmed at a variety of live shows and rehearsals between 1973 and 1980, and interspersed with TV interview footage. But Marley communicated best in song, and his interview pronouncements - "Weed is a good thing" - are not particularly illuminating. The absence of other celebratory or dissenting voices renders his story much less interesting than it actually was. The rarely seen footage of his performances at Zimbabwe's independence celebrations, and the One Love Peace Concert in Jamaica, where he achieved the remarkable feat of getting Michael Manley and Edward Seaga to shake hands, raise fascinating questions about his status as the first Third World superstar, and his career's entanglement in Jamaica's byzantine politics. This coffee-table film sells its subject slightly short by not attempting to answer them.

Ben Thompson

Skanking", "Could

You Be Loved", "Africa

Unite", "Zimbabwe",

"Natural Mystic" by

Bob Marley, "Natty

Dread" by A. Cole,

Bob Marley, "Them

Belly Full" by L. Cogil,

C. Barrett,

Van Gogh

France 1991

Director: Maurice Pialat

Certificate

12

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Companies

Erato Films/Le Studio
Canal Plus/Films A2/
Les Films du Livradois
In association with
Soficas Investimage 2
et 3/Cofimage 2/Sofiarp
With the participation
of Centre National de
la Cinématographie/
Club des Investisseurs/
Canal Plus

Producer

Daniel Toscan
du Plantier

Production

Co-ordinator

Sylvie Balloy

Production Manager

Patrice Arrat

Location Manager

Laurent Gautier

Assistant Directors

Marie-Jeanne Pascal
Christophe Navarre

Screenplay

Maurice Pialat

Director of Photography

Gilles Henry

In colour

Camera Operators

Chief:
Paul-Claude Bessiere
Joël Toupen

Music

A. Bernot
J. M. Bourget
J. Dutronc
P. Revedy

Music Extract

"Second Symphony
for Strings" by Arthur
Honegger

Music Performed by

Bayerischen
Rundfunks Symphony
Orchestra

Sound Editor

Jean-Pierre Duret

Cast

Jacques Dutronc

Vincent Van Gogh

Alexandra London

Marguerite Gachet

Bernard Le Coq

Théo Van Gogh

Gérard Sely

Dr Gachet

Corinne Bourdon

Jo

Elsa Zylberstein

Cathy

Leslie Azoulay

Adeline Ravoux

Jacques Vidal

Ravoux

Chantal Barbarit

Madame Chevalier

Claudine Ducret

Piano Professor

Frederic Bonpart

"The Fly"

Maurice Coussoneau

"Chaponval"

Didier Barbier

The Idiot

Gilbert Pignol

Gilbert

André Bernot

"The Red Mound"

Lise Lamettrie

Madame Ravoux

14,260 feet

159 minutes

Subtitles

● May - July 1890. Vincent Van Gogh arrives by train at Auvers-sur-Oise and finds cheap lodgings at the Ravoux café-bar, where another artist later argues with him about the way one should paint. Vincent visits Dr Gachet, an amateur painter, who gives him a medical examination, shows him his collection of paintings, and talks of his friendship with the artists. Vincent writes a letter to his brother Théo, but refuses to show it to the curious Adeline Ravoux. He paints a picture of the village idiot at his request. Two days later he returns to see Dr Gachet, and paints his daughter Marguerite at the piano. Dr Gachet praises the painting and is annoyed when Marguerite criticises it.

Vincent meets friends from Paris in the woods and makes love to Cathy, a prostitute. Marguerite joins him and they sit amicably at the river's edge. Vincent meets Théo, his wife Jo and baby Vincent at the station, and they spend an idyllic day with the Gachets, first at a meal and then at a riverside dance. Gachet tells Théo that Vincent is sensitive but not ill, and that his paintings are sublime. Walking with Jo along the river bank, Vincent says that he does not want to burden his brother any more, after Jo expresses her worry about Théo's behaviour. Vincent jumps in the water but is rescued by Gachet's son Coco and comes out smiling. Marguerite clandestinely visits Vincent in his room and unbuttons her blouse. Vincent and Marguerite make love in a field, and when Marguerite returns home late, she rows with her father.

Marguerite accuses him of killing

her mother with syphilis, and of hypocrisy in his professed liberal sexual values. Vincent visits Théo and Jo in Paris, where he accuses Théo of not trying to sell his paintings. At the same time, Vincent is rude to visiting critics whose appreciation of his work could help sales. Théo rows with Jo, who calls painting a luxury. Marguerite arrives late at night and Théo takes her to a cabaret to join Vincent, other painters and prostitutes. Vincent and Marguerite, who have been embracing, return by train; she accuses him, however, of paying more attention to his painting than to her.

On their arrival, Dr Gachet meets them and tells Vincent he is an awful person if a wonderful painter. Marguerite accuses her father of not loving her, and after fainting she is taken home. Vincent subsequently shoots himself, stumbling into the arms of his friend, a legionnaire. Théo arrives to tend to him but finds that nothing can be done; Vincent, who has refused an operation, dies holding his hand. Some time later, Marguerite comes out of her house dressed in black, talks to a painter who has come to pay tribute to the famous painters who worked on the same spot, and says of Vincent, "He was my friend".

● Maurice Pialat's *Van Gogh* presents us with only the last three months of the painter's life, beginning just after Vincent has left the asylum. It thus goes against expectations in avoiding the most dramatic episodes in his life: on his arrival in Auvers-sur-Oise, Vincent is diagnosed by Dr Ga-

chet as 'sensitive' rather than ill, and the medical examination shifts to an examination of Gachet's collection of paintings, and to his and the film's interest in Vincent as painter rather than patient. The fictional love affair between Vincent and Gachet's daughter Marguerite is introduced, Pialat claims, so that he can show Vincent as a "man like any other" who, not having the benefit of our hindsight, does not know that he will be acclaimed by posterity and will commit suicide.

Unlike the distinguished films by Minnelli, Altman or Paul Cox, this version eschews the unfolding of a grand destiny of genius and suffering by dwelling on the detail and conflicts of everyday life. This allows Pialat's characteristic realism to come into play, in which both individual emotion and the psycho-socio context is revealed through family confrontations. The last three months of Vincent's life prove particularly suited to his kind of scenario, as he becomes the focus of two family rows: Gachet's opposition to the relationship between Marguerite and Vincent, and Théo's recent marriage to Jo and the birth of their baby, which threatens Vincent's emotionally and financially dependent relationship with Théo (Jo questions her husband's support of Vincent's painting, which she regards as a luxury).

But showing Vincent as a man like any other is precisely to try to normalise what is usually seen as his difference, namely, that Vincent needs to paint as much as he needs to eat in order to live. Meals become the locus for this conflict. Vincent disrupts a meal in



Sad not mad: Jacques Dutronc

his brother's house in order to talk about painting; he resents being called to a meal by Marguerite, and having to interrupt his work on her portrait. In a final irony, his last words are "I am hungry". A meal which unites the two families is central to an idyllic day, which nevertheless is significantly flawed. In a post-prandial walk, Vincent unconsciously rehearses his suicide, after expressing his remorse over the cost to Théo of his financial dependence and his all-too-human uncertainty about the value of his paintings.

In contrast to Rivette's *La Belle Noiseuse*, the painter's struggle to express himself on canvas is absent. Instead Piatat shows that, for Vincent, setting up a canvas was equivalent to the worker going to the fields, a necessity. Piatat also leaves Vincent's paintings in their frames, a classical presentation that rules out any emotional identification with the painter's frenzy and suffering. The depiction of reality is not separated from the medium of art – Piatat chooses 'impressionist' landscapes and interiors that evoke paintings by Renoir, Pissarro, Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec – but it is distanced from Vincent's method of painting.

By paying homage to the countryside and locations frequented by the Impressionists, Piatat emphasises the historical time and place while stressing the difference between how we see and how Vincent saw and painted. This also makes sense of Théo's comment that he wished Van Gogh painted like Renoir, or Renoir like Van Gogh, evoking the well-known ease of being of the Renoirs, father and son, in contrast to Vincent's malaise. But although Piatat avoids any imitation of the 'expressionism' of Van Gogh's paintings, he does try to capture the truth of feelings, "truer than the literal truth". The performance of Jacques Dutronc, a famous *chanteur* of the 60s, conjures Vincent's description: "I painted Dr Gachet with an expression of melancholy... Sad and yet gentle, but clear and intelligent".

Dutronc's inwardness contrasts with the expressionism of Kirk Douglas' performance, and substitutes the notion of sadness for the popular cult of the suffering artist (a sadness that also has to be put in the context of his creative output, the 100 masterpieces painted in 83 days). The film's final scenes best illustrate the virtues of Piatat's portrait in a series of characteristic mood changes. Vincent's death is displaced by the trivial drama of Mme Ravoux, whose foot is caught in a trap door. The scene shifts to Marguerite at a later date, saying to a young painter (perhaps a stand-in for Piatat, who met her in 1953 when he was a young painter), "He was my friend". The film does not end with a dramatisation of the unhappy conclusion to Vincent and Marguerite's fictional romance – nor with the catalogue of astronomical contemporary prices for Van Gogh's paintings with which Altman's film begins – but with an affirmation of the continuity of painting and friendship in Marguerite's joyful smile.

Iiona Halberstadt

Volere, Volare

Italy 1991

Directors: Maurizio Nichetti, Guido Manuli

Certificate
15

Distributor
Metro Pictures
Production Companies
Bambu/Pentafilm
Executive Producers
Mario Cecchi Gori
Vittorio Cecchi Gori
Silvio Berlusconi

Producers
Ernesto di Sarro
Mario Cecchi Gori
Vittorio Cecchi Gori
Production Supervisors
Wilma Scirea
Cinerent:

Andrea Martinazzi
Production Co-ordinator
Mario Maronati
Production Manager
Ornella Bonvini
Assistant Director
Laura Zagordi

Screenplay
Maurizio Nichetti
Guido Manuli
Story Consultant
Duccio Faggella
(Italtoons)

Director of Photography
Roberto Brega
In colour

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Roberto Calvi
Camera Operators
Chief:
Onofrio Coppola
Antonio Coppola
Luciano Ducato

Animation
Quick Sand
Productions
Artistic Director:
Michel Fuzellier
Director:
Walter Cavazutti
Animators:
Giovanni Ferrari
Giorgio Ghisolfi
Mario Addis
Riccardo Mazzoli
Claudio D'Esposito
Chiara Molinari
Raffaello Vecchioni
Antongonata Ferrari
Rotoscope:

Michele La Marca
Hubert Garnich
Laura Nicolosi
Colouring:
Bignardi Films
Secondo Bignardi
(Supervisor)
Luisa Musi
Silvia Loscha
Anna Covili
Federica Paterno
Gianluca Raimondi
Monica Ganzerla
Morena Bellotti
Fabio Bignardi
Erredia 70:
Ennio Stajano
Ivano Goria
Carla Valli
Marisa Tornaghi

Editor
Rita Rossi
Art Director
Maria Pia Angelini
Special Effects
Movie Engineering
Natali

Music Extracts

"Funeral March of a Marionette" by Charles François Gounod;
"L'elisir d'amore" by Gaetano Donizetti;
"Trio Opus 9 No.1 (Scherzo)" by Ludwig van Beethoven;
"Mamma" by C. A. Bixio.
B. Cherubini

Costume Design
Maria Pia Angelini
Wardrobe
Giuseppina Diaferia

Make-up
Renzo Caroli
Sound Editor
Alfonso Oliva
Sound Recordist
Supervisor:
Bruno Guarniera
Dolby stereo
Consultant:
Federico Savina
Sound Re-recorder
Giorgio Vita Levi
Stunts
Holter Togni
Subtitles
Issaverdens

Cast

Angela Finocchiaro
Martina
Maurizio Nichetti
Maurizio
Mariella Valentini
Loredana
Patrizio Roversi
Patrizio
Remo Remotti
Professor Bambino
Luigi Gravier
Mario Gravier
Architect Twins
Renato Scarpa
Photocopy Employee
Massimo Sarchielli
Cuoco
Osvaldo Salvi
Lidia Biondi
Necrophiliacs
Enrico Grazioli
Sadistic Taxi Driver
Mario Pardi
Masochistic Robber
Rocco Cosentino
Sergio Cosentino
Hardware Store
Assistants
Maino Franco
Aldo Izzo
Giuseppe Tosca
Hardware Store
Customers
Nobile Pierluigi
Head Waiter
Andrea Cavalli
Stefano Dondi
Waiters
Regina Stagnitti
Laura Celoria
Adriana Canese
700 Girls
Ianniello Amerigo
700 Hunter
Francisca Oehme
Patrizia Guzzi
Simone Triet
Nathalie Brandenburg
Rosanna Olmo
Girls
Riccardo Margherini
Maria Rosaria Secci
Customers
Valeria Cavalli
Passer-by

8,643 feet
96 minutes

Subtitles



Between goofiness and gravitas: Maurizio Nichetti

The shy, awkward Maurizio works with his brother in a dubbing studio. He specialises in dubbing sound effects on to old cartoons, using his spare time to record strange noises in the street as soundtrack material. His brother runs the other half of the business: supervising a team of beautiful women dubbing soft-porn movies. Martina, who is disillusioned with men, has a freelance job helping to fulfil people's sexual fantasies. Among her clients are twin architects, who arrive in the morning to watch her bathe and dress; the infant, who dresses in baby's clothes and likes to be fed from a bottle; and the mugger, who ambushes her every so often.

One day, Maurizio comes between the screen and the projector during a screening of a cartoon and one of the characters, a turtle, 'escapes' by diving into his top pocket. A couple of birds follow in a similar incident some days later. Maurizio and Martina bump into each other in the street and he immediately falls in love with her. Out of anxiety and clumsiness, he unwittingly becomes involved with some of her clients' stunts: while trying to rescue her from the mugger, he gets beaten up. Maurizio and Martina lose touch, but her customers, turned on by Maurizio's involvement, demand a repeat of their double act and she is forced to try to find him.

They eventually arrange a date. But during a candle-lit dinner, Maurizio is horrified to discover that his hand is turning into a cartoon. This marks the beginning of a slow metamorphosis; he runs away, barricades himself in his house, and refuses to have any further contact with her. Finally, Martina discovers that Maurizio has turned into a cartoon. Totally unfazed, she jumps into bed with him and they make love.

"It takes guts to make love to a real woman", says the cartoon character who draws the curtain over Volere, Volare's final scene as the (literally) animated Maurizio and the all-

too-human Martina dive between the sheets for some unbridled and distinctly unorthodox passion. It is a pleasing enough joke, but not one which can sustain an entire film; even at ninety-six minutes, Maurizio Nichetti's follow-up to *Ladri di saponette* (*The Icicle Thief*) drags where it should sparkle, and its jaunty climax only partly succeeds in relieving the tedium.

In *Ladri*, Nichetti successfully mixed homage and parody to produce a delightfully observed satire of the effect of pop-culture wackiness on the Serious Business of Life. Unfortunately, in his latest effort with co-director Guido Manuli, the recipe seems to have gone wrong. As an ironic fable of sexual insecurities and nervous romancing, *Volere, Volare* is not as clever as mid-period Woody Allen; as a study in Chaplinesque pathos, Nichetti is no Chaplin; as farce, the pratfalls are simply not clumsy enough; and as satire, the targets are too obvious.

There are, moreover, some gaping flaws in the logic of the whimsical plot (and, as John Cleese has remarked of his scripts for *Fawlty Towers*, the more absurd the comedy, the more impeccable the logic has to be). Cartoon animals are allowed to escape from their film into the real world, but it is never made clear how these relate to Maurizio's metamorphosis. And if his turning into a cartoon is a metaphor for his inability to enter into a physical relationship with a woman, what does that say about her apparent infatuation with his new, non-human self?

Perhaps, just as cartoon characters have a difficult time functioning in the real world, human beings find it equally troublesome to relate to Mickey and his pals. Remembering the swift descent into mediocrity of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* after its explosive, exhilarating, all-cartoon opening sequence, the lesson of *Volere, Volare* may be that these experiments in bringing goofiness and gravitas together are bound to fail.

Peter Aspden

The Count of Solar

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Tristram Powell

Distributor
BBC TV

Production Company
BBC Films
For Screen Two

Executive Producer
Mark Shivas

Producer
Ruth Caleb

Production Associate
Carolyn Montagu

Production Manager
Michael Jackley

Casting Adviser
Anne Hopkinson

Assistant Directors
Jamie Annett
Theresa MacInnis

Screenplay
David Nokes
Based on an episode from *When the Mind Hears* by Harlan Lane

Director of Photography
Nigel Walters
In colour

Camera Operator
Simon Maggs

Visual Effects Design
Steve Lucas

Graphic Design
Alan Jeapes

Editor
Ardan Fisher

Production Designer
Bruce Macadie

Music
John Keane

Costume Design
James Keast

Make-up Design
Fran Needham

Sound Editor
Joe Walker

Sound Recordist
John Pritchard

Sound Re-recordist
Keith Marriner

Advisers
Historical:
Harlan Lane
Sign Language:
Wendy Ebsworth

Cast
Tyrone Woolfe
Joseph
Paul Casey
Jean
Jonathan Adams
Physician
Peter Needham
Surgeon

Samantha Best
Aristocratic Woman
Paul Trussell
First Beau
Nick Reding
Cazeaux
Georgina Hale
Countess of Solar
Susan Jameson
Mère St Antoine
David Calder
Abbé de l'Epée
Hermione Norris
Caroline
Tony Newton
Philippe
Janet Henfrey
Mademoiselle Debierre
Sally Mates
Nurse
Charles Simon
Grandfather
Patrick Godfrey
Judge
Danny Schiller
Court Official
John Standing
Coudray
Peter Benson
Doctor Gares
Andrew Kitchen
Painter
Liz Brimicombe
Woman at Exhibition
Arthur Hewlett
Old Man at Exhibition
Stuart Bradley
Young Man at Exhibition
Kim Joyce
Manservant
Lisa Bowerman
Maid
Cornelius Brand
Jason Bowles
Mark Boxall
Daniel Cartwright
Scott Keable
Robert LeMesurier
Edmund Lepre
Mark McCormack
Gareth Morgan
Jason Newport
Daniel Ray
Christopher Sacre
Henry Skinner
Graeme Stewart
Abbé de l'Epée's Boys

7,200 feet
(25 fps) 77 minutes

● In 1786, a young boy is found poaching and sleeping rough in the woods near Picardy. He is taken to the local asylum where he is treated with contempt because he is a deaf-mute. His case is brought to the attention of l'Abbé de l'Epée, who eventually takes him into his school for deaf-mutes and christens him Joseph. Leafing through a book one day, Joseph comes across a drawing of the château of the Count of Solar, which affects him strongly; the abbé learns that it is the place where he used to live.

Subsequent investigation reveals that the old count and his wife are now deceased, leaving a daughter, Caroline. Joseph tells how he was taken away from home on the instructions of his mother by a man who is identified as the family lawyer, Cazeaux, with whom the widowed countess was having an affair. According to Joseph, he was beaten and starved by the lawyer

and finally left to die.

On Joseph's testimony, Cazeaux is thrown into prison, but persuades Caroline to deny that Joseph is her brother. Caroline, who also hopes to have an affair with Cazeaux, agrees, and a long trial ensues. Joseph is represented by the abbé, who eloquently pleads his case and protects him from the mockery of the court. Contradictory evidence about the alleged death from smallpox of the young Count of Solar misleads the court, and the jury is further confused by Caroline's denial of her brother and Cazeaux's perjury.

Joseph's right to the title of Count of Solar is upheld, but there is deemed to be insufficient evidence to convict Cazeaux. For the next three years, Joseph enjoys the life style of a count, not always behaving in the godfearing and decorous way that the abbé has taught him. Following the abbé's death, Cazeaux, now married to Caroline, has the case reopened and wins. In 1789, Joseph is stripped of his title. According to legend, he joined the army of the new republic and was killed in battle after failing to hear the bugler sound retreat.

● *The Count of Solar* is good, diverting television, a humanitarian plea on behalf of the disabled for all lucky, able-bodied people to recognise the person behind the disability. Unfortunately, it never becomes more than that, never takes on any specifically cinematic quality. This is partly to do with budgets: for instance, there are very few exterior shots which might have helped to establish a depth that the film sorely lacks. The interior sets are excellent, conjuring the feel of the period in almost painterly fashion. But this has always been the strength of BBC television drama.

It's also unfortunate that François Truffaut's *L'Enfant sauvage* inevitably offers itself for comparison. Truffaut's film dealt in almost documentary fashion with the 'civilising' of a wild deaf-mute boy in the same historical period, drawing on Rousseau's concept of the noble savage to present a series of ironic contrasts between science and nature. Arguably, it's the more interesting approach to the problematic area of physical disability. For the problem persists: the behaviour of the ogling aristocrats is not that different from present-day attitudes, and it's debatable whether their ignorant amusement is any better than our useless pity.

In the end, *The Count of Solar* is a conventional court-room drama which has more to do with disputed rights of entitlement than Joseph's physical disabilities. The profoundly deaf Tyrone Woolfe makes a strong impression in the title role, and David Calder is excellent as the abbé who invented the use of signing for deaf people. There are several sections in sign language only, subtitled for the hearing viewer, which must have been a joy for deaf people to watch.

Jill McGrail

My Sister Wife

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Lesley Manning

Distributor
BBC TV

Production Company
BBC Films
For Screen Two

Executive Producer
Mark Shivas

Producer
Ruth Baumgarten

Production Associate
Ralph Wilton

Production Manager
Terry Wright

Location Manager
Harbhajan Virdi

Casting Adviser
Sarah Bird

Assistant Directors
Dermot Boyd
Jamie Annett
Beni Turkson

Screenplay
Meera Syal
Based on an original idea by Asmaa Pirzada

Director of Photography
Chris Seager
In colour

Visual Effects Designer
Stuart Brisdon

Graphic Designer
Rosalind Dallas

Editor
Chris Swanton

Production Designer
Tony Burrough

Music
Philip Appleby

Costume Design
Odile Dicks-Mireaux

Make-up Designer
Elaine Smith

Sound Editor
Graham Lawrence

Sound Recordist
Jim Greenhorn

Sound Re-recordist
Keith Marriner

Cast
Paul Bhattacharjee
Asif Shah
Shaheen Khan
Maryam

Meera Syal
Farah Khan
Harriet Bagnall
Poppy
Souad Faress
Mumtaz
Rashid Karapiet
Tariq
Rachna Kapur
Sapna
Anisha Gangotra
Soraya
Jake Sharkey
Photographer
Surendra Kochar
Sabia
Ranjit Krishnamma
Tim Potter
Men at Party
Barbara Keogh
Maureen
Adlyn Ross
Mrs Siddiqui
Sakuntala Ramanee
Suneeta Rathore
Dippie Sagoo
Norma Dixit
Fantasy Wives
Usha Patel
Servant
Shireen Shah
Fauzia
Tania Rodrigues
Young Woman
Syreeta Kumar
Bride
Vidya Wati Rampal
Bibi-bi
Tom Knight
Henry
Peter Howell
Harley Street Doctor
Buffy Davis
Hospital Doctor
Ali Asghar
Departing Guest
Mary Jo Randle
Television Producer
Martin Waller
Television Director

8,100 feet
(25 fps) 86 minutes

● Asif Shah, a rich Pakistani businessman in London, asks Farah Khan, who has grown up in Britain and is equally successful as a carpeting retailer, to marry him. Having fallen in love with Asif, Farah agrees, although she knows that he already has a wife, Maryam (from a marriage arranged abroad and unregistered in the UK), and two daughters. On moving in with him, Farah finds herself sharing the household with Maryam and with Asif's mother, Sabia, who openly disapproves of his new bride.

Farah finds it difficult to adapt to this arrangement, and her insecurity manifests itself in suspicions about Asif's fidelity and physical ill health. She becomes particularly suspicious of the potions that Sabia habitually provides to 'strengthen' her. When Farah's mother dies in an accident, her father moves back to Pakistan and her sense of vulnerability increases. Thinking that a son might cement their relationship, Farah suggests to Asif that they start a new family away from Maryam and her daughters. Asif agrees to think about it while away on business in Pakistan. In his absence, Farah pours one of his mother's potions into a plant;

when the plant dies, she becomes convinced that there is a plot to harm her.

When Asif returns, he reveals that his arranged marriage to Maryam was part of a business deal with her family, making a separation financially undesirable. When Farah attempts to leave Asif, she collapses and is found to be pregnant. She is forced to take extended maternity leave; Maryam meanwhile grows happier and more confident, and eventually takes Farah's place at work. Attracted by the transformed Maryam, Asif begins spending more time with her, fuelling Farah's suspicions. She starts to keep score of their love-making every time Asif's bed springs creak. One morning, she finds that the sound is actually being made by the children bouncing on the bed. When she tries to oil the springs, the bed falls on her and she miscarries.

Becoming increasingly distraught, Farah begins to hallucinate and respond to the voices of four imaginary 'wives'. She also suspects her mother-in-law's hand in the 'accident'. She persuades a pharmacist friend to analyse one of Sabia's potions, and procures a poison herself from an Asian apothecary. On discovering a pregnancy kit in Maryam's bedroom, she resolves to get rid of her adversary. Unfortunately, her plan misfires when Asif, driven to Maryam's bedroom by Farah's behaviour, drinks the poison himself. At the funeral, Farah is informed that Sabia's potion contained harmless nutrients and vitamins. That night, she and Maryam comfort each other in bed.

● When Meera Syal, the writer/star of *My Sister Wife*, made a TV chat-show appearance to promote the film, she introduced it in a mock Indian accent and said it was all about the horrors of arranged marriages. Her defensive attitude underlines the quandary that many Asian writers find themselves in. They are obliged, on the one hand, to act as involuntary cultural ambassadors (even if British-born) who must avoid reinforcing Asian stereotypes (currently running the gamut from the local newsagent victimised by skinheads to the stern religious patriarch who sells his daughters in marriage). And on the other, in trying to say something fresh and provocative about the Asian community, they are open, as Hanif Kureishi ruefully observed, to the community's resentment for "perpetually throwing shit at them".

Comparisons with Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette* remain mandatory, as no other television/film writer (including, in the years since, Kureishi himself) has made such creative use of the Asian viewpoint. In comparison with the Thatcherite winds of change blowing through *Laundrette*, however, Syal's script for *My Sister Wife* is devoid of any immediately recognisable social context, and the prevailing political climate remains anonymous. What politics there are stem from sexual role-playing and gender identification, and are firmly rooted in the home front rather than at work (or anywhere else

in the outside world).

Thus we have to accept that Farah's resounding success as a carpet-retailing executive would not prevent her from accepting secondary status in Asif's household, just as we have to take on trust Maryam's metamorphosis from a barefooted waitress/wife, whose gaze rarely dares to rise above carpet level, to an elegant, sophisticated businesswoman. The plot becomes more recognisable, and may make more sense, if one sees it less in terms of social-realism than of a melodrama like *Rebecca*: there's a potion-mixing, Urdu mother-in-law as Mrs Danvers, and a heavily purdahed, but not quite dead, first wife haunting the proceedings.

Unfortunately, as a thriller, *My Sister Wife* is resolutely unconvincing. The is-she-or-isn't-she-being-poisoned plot never raises much interest, partly due to the film's indifferent pacing, and its hesitation over whether it's a contemplative study of manners or a rapidly moving thriller. Coincidences and inconsistencies mount alarmingly towards the end, with pregnancy test kits featuring confusingly in all the bedrooms, and Farah's hallucinations driving her to a final act of murder. What also undermines these machinations is the fact that Syal's meditations on sexual dependency, and the emotional regression it can lead to, are simply far more interesting.

At one point, when she hears Islamic polygamy defended for its advantages to women, Farah angrily retorts: "Sisterhood! The man struts around thinking, they all love me so much they're willing to share me a quarter each. The joke is none of them really love him, but they'd kill to have him all to themselves". This marks a brave start in questioning a religion in which patriarchy is unashamedly celebrated (the Koran repeatedly states that the gateway to heaven lies at a mother's feet), while women's political and sexual freedom are completely subject to masculine whim. One only wishes that *My Sister Wife* had been able to make more than a start.

Farrah Anwar



More Rebecca: Meera Syal

TV FILM

Utz

United Kingdom 1992

Director: George Sluizer

Distributor

BBC TV

Production Company

Viva Pictures

For BBC Films

In association with

NDK/BBC Films/

Academy

Developed with

the support of the

European Script Fund

Executive Producer

William Sargent

Producer

John Goldschmidt

Line Producer

Albert Schwings

Production Managers

Patrick Brandt

Czechoslovakia:

Viktor Schwarz

Unit Managers

Peter Göhring

Czechoslovakia:

Ivan Helcl

Casting

Polly Hootkins

Assistant Directors

Anouk Sluizer

Gisela Sydow

Czechoslovakia:

Eva Kadankova

Peter Hartl

Screenplay

Hugh Whitmore

Based on the novel

by Bruce Chatwin

Director of Photography

Gérard Vandenberg

In colour

Editor

Lin Friedman

Production Designer

Karel Vacek

Art Directors

Ulrich Schröder

Czechoslovakia:

Frantisek Vokral

Music

Nicola Piovani

Music Performed by

Academia Musica

Italiana

Costume Design

Maria Frankova

Wardrobe

Czechoslovakia:

Petra Barochova

Iveta Balvirova

Make-up

Chief:

Paul Schmidt

Bothilla Bergschmidt

Sound Editor

Jim Shields

Sound Recorder

David John

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recorder

Tony Ancombe

Cast

Armin Mueller-Stahl

Baron Kaspar Joachim

von Utz

Brenda Fricker

Marta

Peter Riegert

Marius Fischer

Paul Scofield

Dr Vaclav Orlik

Miriam Karlin

Grandmother Utz

Christian Mueller-Stahl

Utz age 18

Jakub Zdenek

Utz age 11

Christian Rabe

Utz age 5

Caroline Guthrie

Young Marta

Pauline Melville

Museum Curator

Peter MacKriel

Janitor

Clark Dunbar

Doctor

Adrian Brine

Head Waiter

Gaye Brown

Ada Krasova

Harriet Robinson

American Lady

Vittoria Tarlow

Tall Lady

James Curran

Wine Waiter

Anthony Donovan

Auctioneer

Bonnie Williams

Diane

Vera Soukupova

Favourite Diva

Marjol Flore

French Singer

Hildegard Hütte

Photographer

Michaela Vitkova

Argentinian Lady

Dagmar Maskova

Lenka Smidova

Sona Vesela

Divas

8,550 feet

(25 fps) 91 minutes

● In Geneva, American art dealer Marius Fischer meets Czechoslovakian porcelain collector Baron Kaspar von Utz, who has just completed his collection of a famous set of 'monkey musicians'. In his hotel, Utz remembers the porcelain collection of his grandmother, and how the piece he coveted most, a harlequin figure, was given to him when his father died. Back in Prague, Utz has a stroke, and his close friend Dr Vaclav Orlik summons Fischer with the hint that now he might persuade Utz to part with his collection.

Utz dies after another stroke, however, and the only mourners at his funeral are Orlik and Utz's long-time domestic Marta (who indicates that she may have misled all the other potential mourners, particularly the many operatic divas whom Utz 'collected' as obsessively as he did porcelain). When Fischer arrives, while waiting to meet

Orlik, he remembers his first visit to Utz's apartment, the rooms full of lovingly displayed Meissen, and the silent protective presence of Marta. (In a village near his family's one-time country estate, Utz rescued the young Marta from a mob of angry villagers, who considered her a witch after she was seen supposedly courting a gander.)

Unhappy with the attitude of the new Communist régime towards his collection - which they insist on photographing and marking for later deposit in a state museum - Utz had considered the possibility of moving abroad. He begins visiting Geneva, but finds himself unable to settle in the émigré community. In Prague, Fischer visits him again, and listens to his views on the alchemical properties of porcelain, and the blasphemous relation between God's creation of life, the Golem stories of the Jewish ghetto of Prague, and porcelain-making.

When Fischer at last meets Orlik, he is shocked to hear that, just before Utz's death, his porcelain collection had apparently vanished. Orlik then lets Fischer in on some of the secrets of Utz's life: the fact that Marta had for many years been his wife (so he could keep his larger apartment) but had not shared his bed; that Utz had continued to court and sleep with opera singers, until realising that he was too old for that pastime, had accepted Marta as his wife in fact as well as name. The mystery of what happened to Utz's collection is not revealed to Fischer, however, even when he tries to track Marta down in her village: after his first stroke, finally oppressed by the collection into which he had poured his life, Utz had silently persuaded Marta to break every piece.

● "His face was immediately forgettable. It was a round face, waxy in texture, without a hint of the passions beneath its surface, set with narrow eyes behind steel-framed spectacles: a face so featureless it gave the impression of not being there. Did he have a moustache? I forget. Add a moustache, subtract a moustache: nothing would alter his utterly nondescript appearance". The first challenge for any adapter of Bruce Chatwin's last novel is how to capture the quality of that description: at once wonderfully ironic, humorous and precise, even while what it is describing seems to be vanishing into thin air.

Something about its picture of the Baron von Utz - that "round face, waxy in texture" - suggests that he is himself a collector's item, a piece of cherished porcelain turned this way and that in the light, an activity which will itself wear away the cherished object. The collector's passion consumes the thing collected; so material a pursuit is eventually cancelled out by the spiritual hunger that gave rise to it, by a host of dangerous passions (art-collecting as idolatry, blasphemy, hubris) it unleashes. Which leads to the question Utz can't answer when it's posed by Chatwin's narrator - "Do your porcelains demand their own death?" - but

does implicitly by the end.

That contradictory impulse, so neatly embodied in the novel *Utz*, determined the course of Chatwin's life: the Sotheby's director who threw up a career dealing in artefacts to travel the globe 'collecting' wonders, instances of the material being rubbed away by the spiritual (not easy to put on film, though it's easy to see why Werner Herzog was attracted to Chatwin). What is essentially lacking in this TV adaptation of *Utz* is any sense of the tension, the contradictoriness, of this impulse. Without that there is really no drama, not even a story, just a collection of foibles, and Hugh Whitmore and George Sluizer's *Utz* is pre-eminently an 'eccentric' character play.

There's no danger here of *Utz* disappearing, embodied as he is with bemused dignity, a distracted Old World charm, by Armin Mueller-Stahl. And just to make sure the fragments of Chatwin's tale stick together, the author's equally evanescent 'I' has been turned into one of those bland interlocutor heroes, played with Quiet American respect and polite curiosity by Peter Riegert. Riegert's presence introduces a New World/Old World play-off that doesn't have much to do with the story, or the significance of the porcelains, but does underline all the conventional eccentricities, presumably makes the film more saleable in the US, and allows it to bypass more pertinent cultural details.

Principally, these have to do with the city of Prague and the post-war history of Czechoslovakia. Utz's career is intimately connected to that history, from his beginning as a German-born citizen of the Sudetenland, to the founding of his collection on the misfortunes of others - buying from Jews anxious to leave Germany after Kristallnacht, and from aristocrats fleeing the Soviets at the end of the war - to his ambivalent status under the Communist government of Czechoslovakia ("Was the collector a class enemy? If so, how?").

But the ebb and flow of history is lost in the film's sunny, seemingly eternal Euro-present. Also gone is the gloomy ambience of Prague - despite the participation of a large Czech unit - which Utz sees as his unhappy but natural medium. Whitmore's screenplay quite scrupulously includes all the key speeches, and metaphysical reference points, in the book's discussion of the aesthetics of porcelain and the ethics of collecting. Mention is made of the alchemists and the relationship between gold and porcelain in the quest for "the substance of immortality and potency"; also the Golem story and how the creation of life has a lot to do with fashioning things out of a mound of clay ("Not only was Adam the first human person. He was also the first ceramic sculpture"). But the balance between what is and isn't there in this adaptation of *Utz* has been unhappily reversed; in the process of cultural transposition, George Sluizer this time has made the wrong things vanish.

Richard Combs

Short films

The Comb

United Kingdom 1990

Directors: Brothers Quay

Distributor
BFI

Production Company
Koninck StudiosIn
association with
Channel 4/La Sept

Producer
Keith Griffiths

Screenplay
Brothers Quay

Photography
Brothers Quay

Part in colour

Animation/Editors/
Décor/Puppets
Brothers Quay

Music
Leszek Jankowski

Performers
U. Gembiak

K. Klebba
A. Dambrowski
P. Paluch
A. Korpinski
A. Brychta

Sound Editor
Larry Sider

Sound Recordist
Colin Martin

Technical Assistance
I.M. Nicholas

Narrator
Witold Schejbal

Cast
Joy Constantinides
Sleeping Woman

1,620 feet
18 minutes

As a woman sleeps, a doll on the edge of a forest attempts to climb a ladder out of a hole, while watched over by a figure with a twitching finger. When the woman wakes, the ladder collapses and the doll falls apart. The woman combs her hair.

The Comb carries no less than three subtitles - "From the Museums of Sleep", "Fairytale Dramolet", and "To Scenes and Texts of Robert Walser". The latter is a Swiss writer whose narratives inform the film, particularly his rewriting of fairy-tales, but the film is set to his work, rather than derived from it - so much so that the extracts from his texts, balefully whispered and muttered in several languages, simply become part of the soundtrack, along with various drips, owl hoots, and strident orchestrations of string and wood by the Brothers' regular collaborator Leszek Jankowski.

Of all the Quays' films, this is the one most explicitly concerned with

dream, yet it cannot be reduced to the closed schema of the traditional dream narrative; this despite the contrast between the (mainly) colour animation and the black-and-white live-action framing narrative. There is in fact a blurring between the two levels. The live action is less than it appears - the anamorphically stretched figure of the dreamer is itself animated, shot at 6 frames a second. And there are several equivalences between the dreamer and the figures dreamt - the climbing doll which itself falls into a sleep-like state; the menacing figure whose finger, doubled by the dreamer's own nervous digit, seems to propel the narrative; and a more explicit figure of the dreamer within the dream, a supine doll in lace who is literally pierced by a ladder rising out of her.

This is also, then, the film in which the Quays' sexual thematics are most visible. According to the Quays, the story is simple, a variant on the folk tale of the Prince trying to reach his Sleeping Beauty. The Prince would then be as much a projection of the dreamer as the sleeper-princess within the dream. But for a female dream, the images might seem incongruously phallic. The ladder itself sways deliriously, but immediately after the intertitle, "Suddenly the air grew hard...", the puppet that holds it falls limp, as if in a kind of *petite mort*. Yet after this detumescent moment, desire itself seems to become autonomous, as the hands leave the body and themselves control the ladder. Later, they guide the ladder as it moves through the sleeping doll's flesh, and rub it with masturbatory zeal as it sprouts the leafy extensions that (very nearly) allow the Prince to reach his goal.

This is perhaps a faithful representation of the dream state, in which the body can fragment into its separately desiring parts; and puppet animation is surely the form most able to convey

it. The phallic elements are in any case subverted by a constant breakdown of linearity. After the penetration of the body, the camera cranes up to reveal a vertiginous dome filled with ladders, in a Piranesi-like perspective. There is no room in this world for an unimpeded penetrating gaze - neither in the red wood *trompe l'oeil* landscape we first see, nor in the constantly changing dimensions of the theatre/toybox in which the action seems to take place.

As usual, the Quays refuse any narrative pay-off. After the dream falls apart, there is no reason to imagine that anything has been resolved, or even revealed. The dream can repeat itself, and indeed the film's visual obscurity demands several viewings one after another. The idea of the Sleeping Beauty narrative may be a useful frame to make the film more readable; but the cutting, the lighting, the shifts of focus and field of vision confound that readability at every stage. This is a film to make uneasy sleepers of us all.

Jonathan Romney

L'homme invisible (Invisible Man in Blind Love)

France 1991

Director: Pascal Vuong

Distributor
BFI

Production Companies
Eurocité/Excalibur

Producer
Georges Pansu

Production Manager
Hubert Furneaux

Assistant Directors
Stéphane Ely
Vincent Weill

Screenplay
Pascal Vuong

Director of Photography
Frédéric Achdou

Part in colour

Editor
Christine Paiso

Synthesis Workshop
Mosaïque

Sound
Digison

Adviser
Jerzy Kular

Voice
Ingrid Kessler

418 feet
5 minutes

English version

A car pulls up at night in the city. From inside a dark office, the sounds of police sirens and alarm bells

can be heard; the door opens but only a hat can be seen entering. The hat moves on to a hat stand and a person crossing the office is indicated only by the movement of other objects; drawers are opened revealing a bottle, a gun, and finally a torch and a pair of spectacles. The spectacles are put on and move across the room; books are brushed from the shelves revealing a wall safe from which a small box is removed. It is opened to reveal - in a single flash of colour - a diamond engagement ring. The spectacles and the ring cross to the door, picking up the hat, and as they leave the back-to-front lettering of the Invisible Surveillance Agency is revealed on the door. A photograph of a beautiful, blind Lauren Bacall lookalike is longingly held up in the light as a woman's voice breathes, "I've been meaning to tell you for a long time darling. My blind love is your true love". The car pulls away.

Invisible Man in Blind Love is a sophisticated comedy, an animated film which cleverly pastiches the film noir, the detective thriller, the love story. The core of the joke is the invisible man, which is at once a straightforward gag common to live-action movies and also an 'in-joke' about animated film. After all, what live-action director can make objects move at will across a set, and in an animated film who would worry about whether or not the invisible man is wearing any clothes? There are also one-off jokes, as when the name of the detective agency itself is revealed, both a pun on the invisibility of the proprietor and a reference to a thousand Hollywood detective movies. The dénouement is an audience-pleaser which actually revolves around a complicated pun on the expression 'blind love'. Like holography in art, computer animation often gets carried away with its own technical wizardry. But rarely has the computer been used so effectively as in *Invisible Man*, where the film noir atmosphere is nicely established by the light/dark shadings and in the angular, undisguised computer-generated look.

Jill McGreal

Manipulation

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Daniel Greaves

Distributor
BFI

Production Company
Tandem Films

Producer
Daniel Greaves

Screenplay
Daniel Greaves

In colour

Animation
Daniel Greaves

Model Animation
Shaun Sewter

Inbetweeners
Tom Beggs

Barry Hutchinson
Chris Clarke

Editor
Rod Howick

Sound
Russell Pay

Mike Hackman

597 feet
7 minutes

On a clean white pad, the animator's white-gloved hands draw a male cartoon figure, then spill some red paint. The figure bounces a blob of paint like a ball, but the blob takes on a life of its own, ricocheting about until the figure inadvertently swallows it.



Out of the cellar: 'The Comb'

The animator's hands squeeze the paint from the figure, then attach strings and jerk him around in a dance; cutting himself free, the figure tries to escape.

The hands catch him again and manipulate him ruthlessly, stretching him, squashing him, blowing him up like a balloon, and slamming him against the sides of the frame. The figure tries to retaliate, explodes in a firework display of rage, and finally scrunches himself into a paper ball. He emerges in three-dimensional *papier mâché*, and stabs the hand before falling off the desk. The hand dumps him into a waste-paper bin, but as the animator leaves the studio, the figure doggedly climbs out...

● Right from animation's earliest days, cartoon characters have resented the arbitrary power wielded by their creators. In the silent era, Felix the Cat would often shake his fist indignantly into camera. Chuck Jones' *Duck Amuck* took the convention to surreal heights, with a protesting Daffy Duck subjected to mounting ignominy by the artist (finally revealed as Jones' surrogate, Bugs Bunny). In *Manipulation*, Daniel Greaves sets out the sadism of the relationship at its starkest: when it was shown at Cinanima, animators watching it were wincing in self-recognition.

True, it also celebrates the resilience of cartoon characters in surviving any amount of violence unscathed, but even the upbeat ending is subverted as, over the final credits, we hear the returning footsteps of the ogre-animator. The omnipotent white-gloved hands suggest a nod to Jiri Trnka's bitter parable of Stalinism, *The Hand*, and it's not hard to read the film in terms of political (or existential) allegory. But thanks to Greaves' fluid technique and inventive use of basic resources, *Manipulation* makes compulsive viewing on any level. Its impact is enhanced by a heightened, raw-nerve soundtrack that makes the mere tearing of paper sound like an act of calculated cruelty.

Philip Kemp

Seri volk end krasnaya shapochka (Grey Wolf and Little Red Riding Hood)

USSR 1990

Director: Garry Bardin

Distributor

BFI
Production Company
Soyuzmultfilm

Producer

Garry Bardin

Screenplay

Garry Bardin

Photography

Vadim Prudnikov
Valeri Strukov
Sergei Khlebnikov

In colour

Animation

Lidia Mayatnikova
Irina Sobinova-Kassil
Natalya Fedosova

Editor

(Not credited)

Art Director

Arkadi Melik-Sarkisian

Lyrics

Juri Entin

Musical Arrangement

Garry Bardin

Sound

Vladimir Vinogradov
Sergei Khlebnikov

2,340 feet

26 minutes

Subtitles

● A cottage outside Moscow. Little Red Riding Hood and her mother are baking a Russian holiday pie for Red Riding Hood to take to her grand-



A thousand faces: 'Invisible Man in Blind Love'



Darkness cured: 'Two Sisters'

mother in Paris. Out in the woods, the criminal Grey Wolf is berating the loss of his teeth (they were extracted as a punishment). He goes to visit Dr Doolittle and pleads for a false pair. Dr Doolittle acquiesces but after the wolf puts the teeth in, he gobbles the doctor up and goes on the prowl.

Red Riding Hood starts out on her journey to granny. On her way, she meets the wolf whom she challenges. The wolf scuttles away when a group of soldiers arrive and Red Riding Hood continues on her journey. The wolf follows her, eating up a variety of Disney characters. Finally he catches up with Red Riding Hood, steals her hat, runs on to granny and devours her. Red Riding Hood arrives at granny's and realises that something is wrong. She gives the wolf the pie, which is so hard that when he bites into it, his teeth fall out. The wolf's stomach explodes and all his victims run free.

● In this 'glasnost' musical using model animation, the infamous moppet Little Red Riding Hood and her exaggeratedly buxom mother sing rousing choruses in celebration of the fact that there are no longer borders to friendship between nations. Meanwhile, a mangy big bad wolf laments the loss of his teeth to the strains of "Mac the Knife". Once he has his gnashers back, courtesy of the foolhardy Dr Doolittle, he eats his way through a host of American cartoon icons, with what looks like Bugs Bunny as an appetizer and the Three Little Pigs and

Seven Dwarfs also on the menu.

While welcoming the new era of understanding between Russia and the world now that the teeth of Communism have been extracted, Garry Bardin's parable seems to be an ambiguous statement about the country's new cultural agenda. The wolf contains the American influences, but when they finally break free – admittedly by Dr Doolittle agitating the creature's stomach with a Russian-style folk dance – it is to an ear-splitting burst of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Jesus Christ Superstar". The liberated charge about, waving peace banners and singing "Long live kindness": it could be the Disney Internationale. Red Riding Hood's mother watches incredulously as these scenes flicker on her black-and-white TV. She sheds a tear, and one worries with her what the future for her country might be.

Lizzie Francke

Two Sisters

Canada 1991

Director: Caroline Leaf

Distributor

BFI

Production Company

National Film Board of Canada

Production

Robert Forget
Yves Leduc

English Version:

Dagmar Teufel

Jacques Vallée

Administration

Denise Deslauriers
Francine Langdeau

English Version:

Ghislaine Mathieu

Screenplay

Caroline Leaf

Collaborators

Anne Dandurand

Frederick Ward

Bob Pot

Dialogue

Grant Heisler

Animation Camera

Pierre Landry

In colour

Editor

Camille Laperrière

Music

Judith Gruber-Stitzer

Sound Editor

Wojtek Klis

Sound Recordists

Shelley Craig

Louis Hone

Sound Re-recordists

Jean-Pierre Joutel

Shelley Craig

Foley Artist

Jérôme Decarie

Voices

Kathleen Fee

Michael Rudder

Jane Woods

930 feet

11 minutes

● A man swims across the sea; a caption announces, "There are islands in the wide blue sea where people hide away". Inside a house, there are the sounds of two women, Marie and Viola Gé, humming and sighing. Viola is working at a typewriter; Marie brings coffee, unlocks a drawer and brings out a mirror. The sisters deliberate but Viola's condition is pronounced to be no better. The man comes ashore and bursts into the darkened house; he tells Viola he has read everything she has written and asks her to inscribe one of her books.

Marie is scathing about the effect that the publication of Viola's stories is having on their lives and pushes Viola roughly into the light, revealing her facial disfigurement. While Marie continues her frantic remonstrations, Viola goes outside and sighs with rapture at the new sensations; she writes in the man's book, "To a stranger who sees me in sunlight". The man leaves and Viola finds that Marie has locked her out. But when they face each other again, they realise that everything has changed; amid declarations of mutual love, Viola returns to her typewriter.

● Like much animation, *Two Sisters* is a surface story with a wider meaning. But the film's intentions are stated simply and unpretentiously, without the dull metaphorical weight often characteristic of films which take the parable form. The opening sequence is in dazzling colour, but over the gentle outdoor scenes a note of melancholy is introduced by a recurring musical theme, which heralds the closeted, shadowy world of Marie and Viola Gé. The relationship between the two women is complex: Marie is both her sister's jailer and protector, the feelings between them a mixture of anger and defiance, pain and fear, admiration and tenderness.

Caroline Leaf's vision is impossibly romantic – that the good bright world outside can illuminate and cure our inner darkness – but it is persuasively understated. Leaf made *Two Sisters* by etching each individual frame, without the use of a camera. Like her other award-winning films – made by pushing around sand or oil paint on underlit glass – nothing remains at the end except the film strip. No cells, models or drawings; none of the usual paraphernalia of the animation artist. The style is minimalist, yet with a few etched lines suggesting fingers at a typewriter, Leaf is able to conjure a writer's project in the space of seconds. Within eleven minutes, *Two Sisters* conveys more emotional depth than many full-length feature films.

Jill McGrail

VIDEO

Mark Kermode reviews rental/rental premiere videos released this month and William Green reviews retail/retail premiere videos

Coming out:
Laura Dern in
'Rambling
Rose'



★ Highlights

Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin (MFB) and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses

Rental

Boyz N the Hood

Columbia TriStar CVT 13188
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director John Singleton
★ Brilliant feature debut by the youthful Singleton, painting a harsh but uplifting portrait of life in the ghettos of LA. Blistering script and sensitive direction that encourages proud performances. (S&S November 1991)

Chattahoochee

RCA/Columbia TriStar CVT 11645
USA 1989

Certificate 15 Director Mick Jackson
Hotchpotch tale of a war hero's ordeal in a grim asylum, hampered by studio cutting and bizarre scene rearrangement. (S&S October 1991)

The Commitments

FoxVideo 1906
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Alan Parker
Gutsy adaptation of Roddy Doyle's novel charting the rise and fall of a Dublin soul band. A boisterous music soundtrack but patchy story. (S&S October 1991)

Doc Hollywood

Warner 12216
USA 1991

Certificate 15
Director Michael Caton-Jones
Pleasantly nostalgic comedy about the lost values of old world Americana. A young surgeon (Michael J. Fox), en route to Hollywood, is waylaid in a rural backwater where he finds fulfilment. (S&S November 1991)

Driving Me Crazy

FoxVideo 1929
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Peter Faiman
Sub-standard comedy about a stropky kid and an oddball adult who are forced to make a journey together. The film lacks writer-producer John Hughes' former flair. (S&S March 1992)

The Hard Way

CIC Video VHA 1510
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director John Badham
★ Cracking odd couple-cum-action comedy. Flaky Hollywood star Nick Lang (Michael J. Fox) goes on patrol with hard-nut cop John Moss (James Woods) to research a role. (S&S May 1991)

Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man

MGM/UA 5400
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Simon Wincer
Dire buddy-movie pastiche with feeble, futuristic aspirations. Mickey Rourke and Don Johnson trade insults, punches and fashion tips. Downright ugly. (S&S December 1991)

Jacob's Ladder

Guild 8649
USA 1990

Certificate 18 Director Adrian Lyne
★ Stylish, ambitious and intelligent psycho thriller. Vietnam vet Jacob Singer (Tim Robbins) is beset by terrifying combat flashbacks. Superior schlock. (S&S October 1991)

Mortal Thoughts

Columbia TriStar CVT 12593
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Alan Rudolph
★ Gripping and occasionally chilling thriller. Cynthia Kellogg (excellent performance by Demi Moore) is questioned about the violent death of her best friend's brutish husband. Bruce Willis plays the disreputable victim to a tee. (S&S November 1991)

Oscar

Touchstone 1203
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director John Landis
Tiresome French farce-style antics as gang boss Snaps Provolone (Sylvester Stallone) attempts to go straight. Tim Curry is wasted in yet another camp cameo. (S&S September 1991)

Rambling Rose

Guild 8649
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Martha Coolidge
★ Startling adaptation of Calder Willingham's novel of untamed passion. Fine performances, brave and beautiful direction. Slightly cut under UK child protection laws. (S&S November 1991)

Regarding Henry

CIC Video VHB 2556
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Mike Nichols
Tough guy Harrison Ford goes soft in this schmaltzy tale of a businessman's childish post-trauma reawakening. (S&S October 1991)

Suburban Commando

EV EVV 1217
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Burt Kennedy
★ Sprightly sci-fi spoof boasting a sharp script and great knockabout sight gags. Intergalactic bounty hunter Hulk Hogan brings chaos to earthling Christopher Lloyd's home. (S&S January 1992)

Toy Soldiers

20.20 Vision NVT 13501
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Daniel Petrie Jr
Surprisingly hard-hitting and enjoyable teen-action vehicle. A school for drop-out boys is overrun by drug dealing, gun-toting terrorists. (S&S October 1991)

The Two Jakes

CIC Video VHB 2518
USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Jack Nicholson
Robert Towne's stylish, sprawling, and unashamedly convoluted sequel to *Chinatown* which makes no concessions to popular taste. (S&S December 1991)

Welcome Home Roxy Carmichael

20.20 Vision 13267
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Jim Abrahams
Flawed, whimsical comedy about an adopted small-town girl who believes she is the daughter of a returning local celebrity. (S&S November 1991)

Year of the Gun

First Independent VA 20150
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director John Frankenheimer
Unwieldy thriller set in Red Brigade-riddled 70s Italy. Overwrought and overlong. (S&S February 1992)

Rental premiere

Bed and Breakfast

EV EVV 1188
USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Robert Ellis Miller
Producer Jack Schwartzman Screenplay Cindy Myers Lead Actors Roger Moore, Talia Shire, Colleen Dewhurst, Nina Siemaszko 89 minutes
A British con man is washed up on the shores of Maine and taken in by three women who run a B&B. Dopey romantic comedy.

Broken Badges

Columbia TriStar CVT 13534
USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Kim Manners
Producer John Peter Kousakis Screenplay Stephen J. Cannell, Randall Wallace Lead Actors Miguel Ferrer, Eileen Davidson, Jay Johnson, Teresa Donohoe 95 minutes
★ Unexpectedly entertaining TV comedy-thriller. A killer is tracked by a group of renegade nutcases – a feisty female biker (Davidson, star of *Easy Wheels* – see below), a schizo ventriloquist, and a cowboy-obsessed kleptomaniac. Silly, smart and sassy.

Cast a Deadly Spell

Warner PEV 25018

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Martin Campbell
Producer Gale Anne Hurd Screenplay
Joseph Dougherty Lead Actors Fred
Ward, David Warner, Julianne Moore,
Clancy Brown, Alexandra Powers
92 minutes

★ Wonderful, slickly produced
(belying its cable TV origins), off-beat
fantasy. A detective (Ward) eschews
magic in a 40s Hollywood beset by
weird spells. Indefinable and
delightful, with startling special
effects. (Original title: *Lovecraft*)

Daddy

American Imperial AMP 104

USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Michael Miller
Producer Douglas S. Cramer Screenplay
Jane Howard Hammerstein, L. Virginia
Browne Lead Actors Patrick Duffy,
Lynda Carter 92 minutes

Made for TV adaptation of Danielle
Steel's best-seller pulp potboiler
about a father who has to cope
with becoming a single parent.

Dead End Brattigan

Columbia TriStar CVT 13536

USA 1990

Certificate PG Director Gus Trikonis
Producer N. John Smith Screenplay
Stephen J. Cannell Lead Actors Bruce
Greenwood, Jessica Steen, Gregg
Henry, Aharon Ipale, Harris Laskawy
99 minutes

Roguish journalist antics are the
order of the day in this amiable
TV comedy-thriller.

Dogfight

Warner 12051

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Nancy Savoca
Producers Peter Newman, Richard Guay
Screenplay Bob Comfort Lead Actors Lili
Taylor, River Phoenix, Richard
Panebianco, Anthony Clark
89 minutes

★ Beautifully understated, painful
and open-ended drama from the
director of *True Love*. A Vietnam vet
recalls his blossoming relationship
with Rose, a plain woman (a "dog"),
he picked up for a bet. Sharp,
sensitive and witty.

Doublecrossed

Warner PEV 12343

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Roger Young
Producer Albert J. Salzer Screenplay
Roger Young, based on the story by
Alex Lasker, Roger Young Lead Actors
Dennis Hopper, Robert Carradine,
Richard Jenkins, Adrienne Barbeau
106 minutes

Moderately gripping true-life TV
thriller. Danger loving Barry Seal
(Hopper) is enlisted (and double-
crossed) by the DEA. Intrigue
and action.

Easy Wheels

MCEG Virgin VVP 993

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director David O'Malley
Producers Dimitri Villard, Robby Wald
Screenplay Ivan Raimi, Celia Abrams
Lead Actors Marjorie Bransfield, Barry
Livingstone, George Plimpton
90 minutes

★ Cracking genre parody à la *Piranha*,
Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death.
Radical feminist, baby-stealing bikers,
'The She-Wolves', are pursued by
macho meat-heads 'The No-Hoppers'.
Great script packed with erudite
gags and sexual politics slapstick.

Evil Toons

New Age/20.20 Vision NVT 14606

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Fred Olen Ray
Producer Victoria Till Screenplay
Sherman Scott Lead Actors Madison
Stone, David Carradine, Dick Miller,
Monique Gabrielle 84 minutes
Ray's characteristically schlock answer
to *Roger Rabbit* sets four women against
a badly animated monster. Packed
with in-jokes for genre bores
(e.g. Dick Miller applauding his own
performance in *A Bucket of Blood*) and
deliberately dismal performances.

Fast Food

Odyssey EXC 0033

USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Michael A.
Simpson Producers Stan Wakefield,
Michael A. Simpson Screenplay Clark
Brandon, Lanny Horn Lead Actors
Jim Varney, Michael J. Pollard, Kevin
McCarthy, Traci Lords 90 minutes
Student entrepreneurs combat a
burger-tycoon (Varney) with a burger
bar specialising in a secret aphrodisiac
sauce. Disposable teen-pic with the
usual 'raunchy' humour but without
the usual nudity.

Golden Years

Braveworld BRV 10138

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Directors Kenneth Fink,
Allen Coulter, Michael G. Gornick,
Stephen Tolkin Producers Mitchell
Galin, Peter McIntosh Screenplay
Stephen King, Josef Anderson Lead
Actors Keith Szarabajka, Felicity
Hussman, Frances Sternhagen,
R.D. Call 236 minutes
Seven tacky, plodding TV episodes
strung together to form an
unmanageable monster. An explosion
in a government research lab causes
an aged janitor to grow younger. Better
as a Stephen King short story, with the
emphasis on short.

The Lightning Incident

CIC Video VHB 2591

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Michael Switzer
Producer D.B. Weiss Screenplay Michael
Murray Lead Actors Nancy McKeon,
Tantoo Cardinal, Elpidia Carrillo,



Hulk Hogan, visitor to a small planet

Miriam Colon 86 minutes
Fiendish witches plot to steal Martha
Townsend's baby. By-the-numbers TV
horror with more blood-letting than
the 15 certificate suggests.

McBain

Warner PEV 90151

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director James
Glickenhau Producer J. Boyce Harman
Jnr Screenplay James Glickenhau
Lead Actors Christopher Walken, Maria
Conchita Alonso, Michael Ironside, Jay
Patterson, Thomas G. Waites
103 minutes
Disappointing action vehicle which
wastes Walken's low-key talents. A
Vietnam vet repays a debt by waging
war on Colombian drug lords.

Mirror Images

Medusa MC 373

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Alexander
Gregory Hippolyte Producer Andrew
Garroni Screenplay Georges Des
Esseintes Lead Actors Delia Sheppard,
Jeff Conaway, Richard Arbolino,
John O'Hurley 89 minutes
Flesh and lingerie vehicle with
a silly double identity plot.

My Son Johnny

Odyssey ODY 312

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Peter Levin
Producer Michael O. Gallant Screenplay
Peter Nelson Lead Actors Michele Lee,
Rick Schroder, Corin Nemec, Rip Torn
90 minutes
True-life drama about sibling violence
in America. A mother defends her son
against charges of murdering his
brother.

Neon City

First Independent VA 20149

USA 1992

Certificate 15 Director Monte Markham
Producer Wolf Schmidt Screenplay Buck
Finch, Jeff Begun, Monte Markham
Lead Actors Michael Ironside, Vanity,
Lyle Alzado, Valerie Wildman, Nick
Klar 103 minutes

Standard *Mad Max* type future fantasy,
executed with explosive flair. A bounty
hunter and his captive embark on a
perilous quest to the 'Neon City'.

Papcorn

High Fliers HFV 8202

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Mark Herrier
Producers Torben Johnke, Gary Goch,
Ashok Amritraj Screenplay Todd
Hackett, based on the story by Mitchell
Smith Lead Actors Jill Schoelen, Tom
Villard, Dee Wallace Stone, Derek
Rydall, Tony Roberts 87 minutes
Ropey but lively horror spoof. Students
at an all night 'gimmick horror'
festival are stalked by a supposedly
dead director. Highlights are the
excerpts from *Mosquito* in *Project-O-
Vision*, *Attack of the Amazing Electrified
Man* in *Shock-O-Scope*, and *The Stench*
in *Aroma-Rama*.

Puppet Master III: Toulon's Revenge

CIC Video VHB 2576

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director David Decouteau
Producers John Schouweiler, David
Decouteau Screenplay C. Courtney
Joyner Lead Actors Guy Rolfe, Ian
Abercrombie, Sarah Douglas, Richard
Lynch 78 minutes
The grisly puppet saga continues with
this flashback to Nazi Germany where
André Toulon's mannequin's seek
revenge against Hitler's henchman. FX
highlights include the Leech Woman
who vomits bloodsucking slugs on
her victims.

Quicker than the Eye

Odyssey EXC 0034

Switzerland/France/Germany 1989

Certificate PG Director Nicolas Gessner
Producer Peter-Christian Fueter
Screenplay Joseph Morhaim, Nicolas
Gessner Lead Actors Mary Crosby,
Ben Gazzara 90 minutes
Dull, cheap family thriller. Magician
Ben Norrell (Gazzara) gets caught up
in murderous political shenanigans.

Race for Glory

20.20 Vision NVT 12849

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Rocky Lang
Producers Jon Gordon, Daniel A.
Sherkow Screenplay Scott Swanton
Lead Actors Alex McArthur, Peter Berg
103 minutes
Motorbike-racing drama about two
buddies whose loyalties are divided
when the big time beckons.
McArthur is great but deserves
a better vehicle.

Stepfather III

ITC 9154

USA 1992

Certificate 18 Director Guy Magar
Producers Guy Magar, Paul Moen
Screenplay Guy Magar, Marc B. Ray Lead
Actors Rob Wightman, Priscilla Barnes,
David Tom, John Ingle, Season Hubley
105 minutes

Satirical slasher series that continues
to take stabs at all-American family
values. Gory details include a gut-
wrenching face-lift opening sequence
and a bloody finale in an industrial
mincer – not for the faint-hearted.

Valentino Returns

High Fliers HFV 8106

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Peter Hoffman
Producers Peter Hoffman, David
Wisniewitz Screenplay Leonard Gardner
Lead Actors Frederick Forrest, Veronica
Cartwright, Jenny Wright, David
Packier, Bruce Tubbs 91 minutes
50s rites-of-passage, family-ties drama
with the usual period soundtrack.
Diverting but unoriginal.

Wise Guys: In the Line of Duty II

Genesis EXC 0035

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Peter Markle
Producer Kenneth Kaufman Screenplay
Dick Bebe Lead Actors Tony Danza,
Samuel Jackson, Ted Levine 90 minutes
Surprisingly bloodless true-story
thriller about the DEA's hunt for the
killer of one of its own. Nice
performance by underrated Levine.

Retail

Aliens – Special Edition

FoxVideo 1802

USA 1986 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director James Cameron
With seventeen minutes of cut footage
restored, diehard Sigourney Weaver
fans will be delighted with this
version, available for only three
months. Weaver battles it out with
the best of Hollywood's special effects.
(MFB No. 632)

Almost an Angel

CIC Video VHR 2508

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director John Cornell
Antipodean Paul Hogan has his
comic talents spread too thinly in this
charmless story of a petty thief who
thinks he is immortal. (MFB No. 685)

Back to the Future Part III

CIC Video VHR 1446

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Robert Zemeckis
Final episode of the Einsteinian
adventures of Michael J. Fox and
Christopher Lloyd, which sensibly

abandons the previous nostalgia of
the 50s and heads back in time to 1885
and the fun of the Wild West. Great
special effects. (MFB No. 678)

Bad Influence

EV EVS 1040

USA 1990 Price 10.99

Certificate 18 Director Curtis Hanson
Troubled yuppie James Spader is led
astray by evil mentor Rob Lowe. Sex,
lies, video cameras and clothes seem
to be Hanson's main preoccupations.
(MFB No. 681)

Black Shack Alley (Rue Cases Nègres)

Artificial Eye ART 029

France 1983 Price 15.99

Certificate PG Director Euzhan Palcy
★ Début feature for West Indian
director Palcy who went on to make



Garry Cadenat, out of *Black Shack Alley*

A Dry White Season. Her sympathetic
portrayal of shanty-town life in 30s
Martinique under French colonial
rule won several awards. Subtitles
(MFB No. 606)

Cadillac Man

Columbia-TriStar CVR 22809

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Roger Donaldson
Silver-tongued car salesman Robin
Williams soft-soaps unwary bargain
hunters and their wives in a mostly
unamusing comedy. (MFB No. 681)

Catchfire

First Independent VA 20125

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Alan Smithee
(Dennis Hopper)
★ A much-truncated and badly
butchered chase-kidnap film,
disowned by its director, but worth
seeing for the runaway performances
of Hopper as a Mafia hit man, and
Jodie Foster as his victim turned love
interest. (MFB No. 685)

Clean and Sober

Warner PES 11824

USA 1988 Price £10.99

Certificate 15
Director Glenn Gordon Caron
Middle-class drug fiend Michael
Keaton loses his friends, his girlfriend
and his job, but learns eventually to
'just say no'. As much fun as an AA
meeting. (MFB No. 677)

The Court Jester

CIC Classic VHR 2530

USA 1955 Price £9.99

Certificate U Directors Norman Panama,
Melvin Frank
Basil Rathbone, Angela Lansbury and
Cecil Parker join in jolly jousting with
Danny Kaye. A fascinating case study
for scholars examining the mystery
of Kaye's post-war popularity.
(MFB No. 266)

Bill Douglas Trilogy

My Childhood/My Ain Folk

My Way Home

Connoisseur CR 064/CR 065

UK 1972/1973/1978 Price £15.99 each
(2 tapes)

Certificate 15 Director Bill Douglas
★ Three films from the late Scottish
director whose frustrating career only
allowed him scope for one further
film – *Comrades*. Made over seven years
with the same actor (Stephen
Archibald), Douglas' short trilogy is
the autobiographical account of a
poverty-stricken and emotionally
stunted upbringing – from mining
village, to children's home to national
service in Egypt. Made on a minimal
budget, the painful memories are
resurrected with clarity and a sad
beauty. B/W (MFB Nos. 463/491/538)

Father of the Bride

Warner PES 50841

USA 1950 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Vincente Minnelli
★ Steve Martin fell on his face trying
to remake this classic Joan
Bennett/Spencer Tracy comedy
recently. The original owes most of its
charm to Tracy's inimitable grouchy
performance as the anxious father.
(MFB No. 198)

Fear

First Independent VA 30224

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Rockne S.
O'Bannon
Clairvoyant Ally Sheedy is hired by the
police to lead them to a serial killer –
a psycho who turns out to be psychic
as well. A thriller that never really
delivers. (MFB No. 686)

Flatliners

Columbia-TriStar CVR 22461

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Joel Schumacher
'Brat packers' Julia Roberts and Kiefer
Sutherland, amongst others, indulge
in reckless mind and body medical
experiments with death. Glossy,
well-packaged chiller. (MFB No. 682)

The Glass House

Odyssey ODY 725

USA 1972 Price 10.99

Certificate 15 Director Tom Gries
Made-for-TV brutal prison movie that

pulls few punches. Alan Alda and Vic
Morrow share the acting honours with
some real-life inmates of the Utah
State Penitentiary. (MFB No. 467)

The Great Mr Handel

Connoisseur CR 063

UK 1942 Price £15.99

Certificate U Director Norman Walker
An unusual bio-pic to choose for the
entertainment of a wartime audience
– the story of a German-born
composer whose greatest work,
Messiah, was first played in Dublin.
This restored version marks the 50th
anniversary of the film and the 250th
of the piece of music. (MFB No. 106)

The Grifters

Palace PVC 21805

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Stephen Frears
★ Superbly directed erotic thriller
adapted from the novel by Jim
Thompson. Anjelica Huston, John
Cusack and Annette Bening delight
in their seedy roles as con-artists and
petty criminals. (MFB No. 685)

Havana

CIC Video VHR 1484

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Sydney Pollack
In Batista's Cuba, gambler Robert
Redford and revolutionary Raul Julia
vie for Lena Olin in a *Casablanca*-style
love triangle. (MFB No. 685)

Houseboat

CIC Classic VHR 2605

USA 1958 Price 10.99

Certificate U Director Melville Shavelson
Harassed widower Cary Grant hires
Sophia Loren (a runaway heiress) as an
au pair to his three unruly children.
Much light-hearted banter.
(MFB No. 298)

I Bought a Vampire Motorcycle

Braveworld STV 2087

UK 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Dirk Campbell
Enjoyable horror comedy about a
motorbike possessed by an evil spirit,
let down by misogynistic elements.
Even so the horror is nicely balanced
by (toilet) humour and slapstick.
(MFB No.678)

An Innocent Man

Touchstone D 409102

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Peter Yates
Tom Selleck suffers nobly but
improbably as a yuppie family man
jailed after a police frame-up.
(MFB No. 677)

Internal Affairs

CIC Video VHR 2451

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Mike Figgis
★ Richard Gere gives an excellent

performance as a crooked cop struggling to shake off good guy Andy Garcia. Fine thriller made by the talented British director of *Stormy Monday*. (MFB No. 676)

Kill Me Again

ITC NB 9107

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director John R. Dahl
Tatty desert motel rooms, suitcases of stolen money and torrid love on the run...Val Kilmer, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer and Michael Biehn revel in the stock thriller clichés. (MFB No. 681)

The Krays

Polygram 083 9103

UK 1990 Price 10.99

Certificate 18 Director Peter Medak
London's infamous gangland bosses of the early 60s are given the spurious glamour of cinema nostalgia, overdressed by the costume department and incarnated by rock stars Gary and Martin Kemp. (MFB No. 675)

Listen Up: The Lives of Quincy Jones

Warner PES 12330

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Ellen Weissbrod
A documentary celebrating the music of Quincy Jones through interviews with other famous notables (Miles Davis, Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald...) and documentary footage. For fans only. (S&S August 1991)

Look Who's Talking Too

Columbia-TriStar CVR 22842

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Amy Heckerling
Worse than it sounds - with the single baby of the original comedy now joined by two other insufferable tots. Voiced-over by Bruce Willis, Roseanne Barr and Damon Wayans. (MFB No. 686)

Mean Streets

Video Collection VC 3382

USA 1973 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Martin Scorsese
★ The first of many films with Scorsese and Robert De Niro joining forces. A hard-hitting, naturalistic story of four young Italian-Americans who hang out in a bar in New York's Lower East Side. It doesn't come tougher than this. (MFB No. 484)

Merci la vie

Artificial Eye ART 027

France 1991 Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director Bertrand Blier
Blier's experimental film-making style overreaches itself and falls apart. A fascinating failure in which provocative nonsense (dealing with issues such as AIDS and Nazis) becomes nonsensical provocation. With Charlotte Gainsbourg and Anouk Grinberg. Subtitles (S&S January 1992)



Mad love: Dennis Hopper, Jodie Foster in 'Catchfire'

Misery

First Independent VA 20138

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Rob Reiner
★ Brutal kidnap thriller marking a return to form for scriptwriter William Goldman. An obsessed nurse (Kathy Bates) cares for injured writer James Caan - whether he likes it or not. (S&S May 1991)

My Girlfriend's Boyfriend (L'Ami de mon amie)

Artificial Eye ART 028

France 1987 Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Eric Rohmer
★ The final film in Rohmer's *Comedies et Proverbes* series. A lightweight piece about young friends criss-crossed in love, much concerned with mathematical symmetries and emotional miscalculations. Subtitles (MFB No. 654)

New York, New York

Warner PES 51321

USA 1977 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Martin Scorsese
★ The longest, loudest and most lavish of the films Scorsese made with Robert De Niro in the 70s. A warm-hearted chanteuse (Liza Minnelli) endures a stormy affair with a selfish sax player (De Niro). Bold and brassy - *A Star Is Born* for adults. (MFB No. 524)

Rocky V

Warner PES 99727

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director John G. Avildsen
One more knockdown and one more gritty comeback for the ageing heavyweight. Stallone does his best as a blue-collar boxer to beat the count of advancing middle age. (MFB No. 685)

Samson and Delilah

CIC Video VHR 2597

USA 1949 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Cecil B. De Mille
Absurdly overblown and unintentionally comic biblical epic where the supporting players (George Sanders, Angela Lansbury) outshine

the stars (Victor Mature, Hedy Lamarr). (MFB No. 205)

Scissors

First Independent VA 20134

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Frank de Felita
Object of beauty Sharon Stone is threatened by her nightmares in a thriller that is sharp and blunt by turns. (S&S September 1991, Video)

The Silence of the Lambs

Columbia-TriStar CVR 22819

USA 1990 Price £12.99

(Deluxe Edition £19.99)

Certificate 18 Director Jonathan Demme
★ The movie of 1991. Incarcerated psycho killer Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) teasingly aids rookie cop Jodie Foster as she tries to capture a serial killer. Disturbing and chilling. (S&S June 1991)

Society

Polygram MED 12631

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Brian Yuzna
★ Debutant rich kid Bill Warlock enters the Beverly Hills smart set with a startlingly original approach to sexual congress. A sophisticated addition to the latex and flesh horror genre. (MFB No. 675)

Stalag 17

CIC Classic VHR 2604

USA 1952 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Billy Wilder
William Holden, Don Taylor and Otto Preminger in a prison-camp drama. The comedy skits have dated but the venomous characterisations stand up well. B/W (MFB No. 234)

Stanley & Iris

Warner PES 51694

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Martin Ritt
A struggling widow (Jane Fonda) falls in with an illiterate cook (Robert De Niro) and teaches him to spell. Neither distinguished actor unbends sufficiently to convince. (MFB No. 677)

Suspiria

EV EVS 1040

Italy 1976 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Dario Argento
Pursued by storms, blasts of rock music and witches, Jessica Harper struggles to escape the wrong kind of Swiss finishing school. A stylistically excessive thriller. (MFB No. 525)

Verboten!

Odyssey ODY 717

USA 1958 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Sam Fuller
A characteristically lurid, low-budget Fuller action pic. Fuller throws battlefield footage, concentration-camp and Nuremberg trial documentary material together to back up a paranoid tale of neo-Nazis. B/W (MFB No. 307)

The Young Stranger

Odyssey ODY 718

USA 1957 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director John Frankenheimer
A debut flop for the 27-year-old Frankenheimer who later found better material and actors in *All Fall Down* and *The Manchurian Candidate*. James McArthur plays a teenage misfit whose movie producer father doesn't understand him. B/W (MFB No. 281)

Retail collections

John Cassavetes Collection

Faces

USA 1968 *Certificate 15* B/W

The Killing of a Chinese Bookie

USA 1976 *Certificate 15*

Opening Night

USA 1978 *Certificate 15*

Shadows

USA 1959 *Certificate PG* B/W

A Woman Under the Influence

USA 1975 *Certificate 15*

Palace Classics PVC

2269S/2271S/2272S/2270S/2273S

Price 15.99 each

Director John Cassavetes

★ The independent films of Cassavetes were always an insult to Hollywood values with actor improvisation, camera shake, slap-dash editing and primal-scream therapy. This collection of his work (lacking, unhappily, *Husbands* or *Minnie and Moskowitz*) demonstrates his exceptional boldness with film techniques and actors. Whether the subject is the public stage (*Chinese Bookie*, *Opening Night*) or the private theatre of marriage (*Faces*, *Women*) and the family (*Shadows*), the actors always give their all. Often strident, always over-pitched, the songs never lack for passion. (MFB Nos. 419/556/533/323/504)

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Index

**Sight
and
Sound**

The Sight and Sound annual index for Volume 1 (May 1991 - April 1992) is now available. The 12 page index includes the following sections:

- a comprehensive general subject index
- film reviews by title and director
- book reviews by title and author
- contributors
- video reviews

Subscribers will receive their index with the May issue

Non-subscribers to the magazine may purchase the index for: £2.50 including p&p (UK, Europe); £4.00 including p&p (overseas). Please order from:
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Closing Date: 11 May 1992.

Letters

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Utz

From John Goldschmidt

I'd like to correct an inaccuracy in the editorial in your April issue.

It may be true that *Riff Raff* failed initially to find a UK distributor, but this certainly was not the case with our film *Utz*.

Both the Curzon cinema and the Lumière wanted to release the film but our contract with the BBC gave them the right to broadcast at any time of their choice. Whereas NDR had guaranteed a two-year theatrical window for Germany, BBC2 Controller Alan Yentob would not delay the planned transmission date of 15 March, making the 13 March opening at the Curzon West End impossible.

Although we were disappointed with this BBC decision, we are also indebted to Mark Shivas' support, without which we could not have made the film. We nevertheless hope that the film will open in a London cinema this autumn.

Viva Pictures Ltd, London

Obscure objects

From Philip Raby

I'm not a great advocate of the system of stars in *Empire* magazine to denote the merits of a film, but I increasingly find that the reviews in your magazine are opaque in intent, and almost determinedly perverse in attitude. Take for example the batch in this month's edition (S&S March). Of the nine films you review which I have seen myself, the reviewer seems mildly enthusiastic about two of them: *Blame it on the Bellboy* – "a good farce", and *The Last Boy Scout*. *Hear My Song*, which as you point out is a British film that has done extremely well in America, is dismissed as not being innovative, and for lacking authenticity. Who was it that decreed that the film should achieve these qualities? The whole point of the film is that it is a nostalgic, whimsical fantasy. You might as well criticise *Les Enfants du paradis* for not having enough car chases.

Fried Green Tomatoes is dismissed for not being a 'three-course meal'. That is to say, a film must be profound and meaningful to linger in the memory. It's harder to see on what grounds Jonathan Romney dislikes *Black Robe*, though it's easy enough to see that he dislikes it. Is it that the scenery is too beautiful, the dichotomy too extreme, the depiction of Native American culture circa 1630 (in which he is doubtless an expert) too inaccurate? Certainly he seems to have misunderstood the end of the film in the same way that a lot of critics misunderstood the end of *The Deerhunter*. It does not reaffirm the creed that has been questioned. It continues the questioning. Jonathan Romney also writes at length about *The Double Life of Véronique*, but I was no clearer at the end of the review whether he liked the film than I was at the beginning. I wasn't clear about anything much after sentences like: "Seen in this light, the film might seem a fairly conventional box of ontological tricks, recycling traditional metafictional paradoxes".

For the rest, I agree with the dissection of *Father of the Bride*, and I found the review

of *Cape Fear* interesting, though overanxious to refer to as many other films as possible – rather like Scorsese.

Yours is the most intelligent film magazine around, and a vast improvement on what it used to be. But somewhere between the shallows of *Empire* and the uncharted depths of semiotics, there must be an audience for a selection of intelligent, informative and lucid reviews. I am of the Pauline Kael school; I want an emotional as well as an intellectual response to the film, and one that takes the film on its own merits, without criticising it for something it's not trying to be. Who is it that your reviewers write for?

Bath

Twin Peaks

From Tom Zaniello

Although I may be over-reacting, surely listing only four of the seven directors of the first eleven episodes of the *Twin Peaks* television series (S&S February) not only diminishes the large number of directors in this supposedly auteurist series, but also ignores the inclusion of an unusually high number of directors who are women. The three you do not list are Tina Rathborne, Lesli Linka Glatter, and Duwayne Dunham. Rathborne (*Zelly and Me*) and Glatter (*Into the Homeland*), plus a third director of a later *Twin Peaks* episode, Diane Keaton (*Heaven*), have all directed substantial feature films (some for television) in addition to their work for *Twin Peaks*.

Furthermore, when the entire run of episodes (thirty in all) is considered, one discovers that although only three of the fifteen directors are women, they account for more than 20 per cent of the total number of episodes.

Kentucky, USA

Creative props

From Nat Bocking

I have recently read your March issue. I buy your magazine for its quality reviews and comprehensive credit listings, but I must complain about your oversight of the property master credit from the listings. If motion picture producers are kind enough to list our names in the credits, you must have access to the information. Is it because you consider that the property master has no creative contribution to the motion pictures listed, in the same way you don't list the drivers and craft service personnel, or is it because you wrongly assume that US property masters work under the British model of labour division and are only minions of the art department?

The property master on American productions is responsible for realising all the script requirements for anything that a character might hold. There are several exceptions to this generalisation, such as also being required to procure boats, food, watches, jewellery and eyewear. In a period setting such as *Bugsy* or *The Mambo Kings* this is a formidable task, undertaken in collusion with but independently from the art department.

How many plots revolve around a hero prop such as a letter, a knife, a vial of poison? Like many things in motion picture production, props are invisible until they are inappropriate. How much of Arnold Schwarzenegger's appeal as the Termina-



'Fried Green Tomatoes': not a three-course meal

tor is derived from his choices of weapons and sunglasses provided by the propmaster? Would Cher's canapes in *Mermaids* inspire a cookery book if not for the inventiveness of the property master, Don Miloyevich?

As well as creative aspects to the job, the propmaster has a massive budget to oversee and is responsible for many legal aspects. The various safety committees require him or her to provide for the safety of the crew and most propmasters spend thousands of hours keeping up with weapons legislation. The insidious practice of product placement has made property masters the bridge between companies and producers giving them the power to influence fashion and popular taste. I hope that you will remedy your omission in future issues.

California, USA

● Richard Combs, associate editor, replies: The credits given in *Sight and Sound*, carrying on the tradition of the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, have expanded greatly over the years. They are comprehensive but not, of course, complete. There may well be a case for adding the property master to the extensive art direction and set decoration credits already given.

Hear My Song again

From Michael Relf

Primed by Tom Charity's humorless review (S&S March) and Quentin Falk's grateful endorsement of its criticisms (S&S April) I went to see *Hear My Song*, prepared for the worst. I found it a delightful and original film. Of course it has been overpraised by critics starved of genuinely warm-hearted material, but it is a skilful piece of film-making that richly deserves its critical and commercial success.

The story is original – genuinely funny and moving. The acting – mostly by unfamiliar faces – is exceptionally true; it is beautifully shot and edited; Sue Gibson's photography is outstanding; the production design by Caroline Hanania and the clothes by Lindy Hemming are perfectly in character; John Altman's use of music is exceptionally skilful and in everything the expert and loving hand of Peter Chelsum is evident.

Instead of sneering at Channel Four and British Screen, Quentin Falk should thank God that a minority television channel and a pathetically underfunded government agency have been able to keep alive a slender line of British production that is still capable of producing gems like *Hear My Song*.

To say that the film is reminiscent of the best of Ealing or the work of Bill Forsyth is not pejorative. Both have a genuinely British character too often swamped by Hollywood flash-trash such as *Cape Fear* or *Terminator II*. The Americans are the best film-makers in the world, but there is a place in the market for British films if they are as good as *Hear My Song*.

In conclusion, I must comment on Tom Charity's outrage that the audience at Heartly's is all white. This may be deeply sinister in the eyes of *Sight and Sound*, but is more likely to be due to the fact that few black Liverpudlians would be attracted to a concert of old songs by a forgotten Irish tenor in a derelict theatre.

London

To be a camera or not to be

Benjamin Woolley

New technologies, it is said, are at first understood in terms of the old: film as recorded theatre, television as radio with pictures, the car as carriage-less horse. The computer, too, is understood – and misunderstood – by what it is intended by many to replace: the word processor is treated as a sort of glass typewriter, the database program as a Rolodex with knobs on.

Last year, the computer graphics company Autodesk introduced a software package called '3D Studio'. It was a program aimed at non-specialist users, people wanting to use standard desktop computers to create their own computer animations. In common with other graphics programs, Autodesk used simple cinematic metaphors to explain the program's facilities. The user created a sort of virtual set, populated it with computer-generated props and characters, and used 'lights' and a 'camera' to 'film' the animation.

As an experiment, I used 3D Studio to create a simple city centre (based, I have to admit, on pre-defined examples supplied with the software), with cars driving through its streets. To animate this scene, I had to specify where the camera would be from one frame to the next, which I did by positioning it for particular 'key frames', the computer working out where it would go in between. The same could be done for the lights and any other movable object.

The cinematic metaphor worked well, but was it also a limitation? Is the idea of the camera's privileged point of view appropriate to computer-generated imagery? Does the metaphor, in other words, limit a medium that could offer a new way of looking at things?

The complication with computer graphics is deciding what 'things' are being looked at. It is no physical reality, rather – at least as far as the computing community is concerned – a virtual one, created by mathematics. This realm can be used to simulate physical space, but it can also be populated



Is the concept of the camera a restraining metaphor in computing, preventing it from developing new forms of visualisation, or a revealing one?

by all sorts of other objects, mysterious abstract forms such as the Mandelbrot Set and the 'strange attractors' of chaos theory, "a graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system", as the novelist William Gibson put it in his famous description of 'cyberspace'. "Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights receding". Is this realm best explored using cameras, or is a whole new concept of visualisation called for?

The most familiar challenge to the idea of the camera's point of view comes from virtual reality, where the user is immersed in this cyberspace. In virtual reality, there is no mediating camera; the scene is witnessed directly. But virtual reality still assumes that the virtual realm is essentially witnessed as a sort of physical space. Some of the sorts of objects that exist in the 'mathematical wonderland' of pure forms

exist not in the mundane three dimensions of earthly space, but in the tens, hundreds even thousands of dimensions that make up what is technically called the 'phase' space of mathematical forms.

To most of us, such a space may seem remote from everyday experience and its exploration a matter of literally academic interest. However, this phase space is home to what one might call the patterns of modern life. Computer modelling and simulation seem to be unearthing a whole series of structures that underlie our social and economic activity, even determine it. We glimpse such structures in the graphs so lifelessly presented on television news bulletins. In a world viewed down the barrel of a camera's lens, they otherwise remain invisible. The camera privileges the physical over the virtual, even when what is being filmed is itself, as it is with any computer graphics program, virtual. Perhaps a post-camera form of visualisation would reveal these patterns, enabling us to see them properly for the first time.

A reader or two may by now feel that, whatever space I may be writing about, they have become thoroughly lost in it. That is because there are few of those familiar metaphors to help show the way. We have left the well-mapped world of the camera and started to search for a completely new way of seeing, a new point of view – perhaps, indeed, a view that can no longer be collapsed into a single point, but has to be seen as a complex set of interactions between the viewer and what is being viewed, where watching is no longer an equivalent to seeing, since only with the audience's participation can whatever is being shown be truly witnessed.

The question is, whether the concept of the camera is a restraining metaphor in computing, preventing it from developing new forms of visualisation, or a revealing one, making something that is complex and unfamiliar easier to understand. While the camera remains dominant, the answer probably depends on your point of view.

Professor Potemkin's competition

Sackfuls of correct entries were received for our March quiz, although many readers tripped on Question 2, believing the author of 'Absalom, Absalom' (and scriptwriter of 'The Big Sleep') to have been Raymond Chandler. The full set of answers reads: 1. de Laocis; 2. William Faulkner; 3. Arthur Miller; 4. Bertolt Brecht; 5. Andrei Konchalovsky; 6. Billy Wilder; 7. Graham Greene; 8. The Marx Brothers; 9. Philip K. Dick; 10. Troy Kennedy Martin. Box sets of 'A Rage in Harlem' (Palace Rental) go to ten winners: Richard Martin of Newcastle; Ann Furey of Southall; Alex Hamilton of Inverness; Stephen Gallagher of Blackburn; D. Bridgman of Manchester; Douglas McCabe of Glasgow; Martin Kirby of Peckham; S. C. Parkes of Bournemouth; Franc O'Kane of Belfast; and the faithful Eve Tate of Leicester.



This month's competition is entitled 'Capital Crimes' in honour of the prize – a weekend for two in Nottingham to coincide with the opening weekend (Friday 29 May until Sunday 31 May) of the 'Shots in the Dark' crime and mystery festival. Included in the prize is rail travel to Nottingham, accommodation (including meals) in a four star hotel and free tickets for a variety of festival events, including the opening film premiere and reception. The competition is limited to UK residents, the closing date is 15 May. Please send your entries, with a note of your daytime telephone number, to Professor Potemkin's Competition, Sight and Sound, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL or fax (071) 436 2327.

1. Krzysztof Kieslowski's epic Polish cycle 'Dekalog' takes the Tablets of Moses as its subject. What is the title of the 1987 film which covers the Fifth Commandment?
2. Bodies are not always found in libraries. Where do the victims of 'Les Diaboliques' and 'Sunset Boulevard' end up?
3. Before embarking on a busy TV career as a defence lawyer and later a detective, this Canadian actor was a wife-murderer in Hitchcock's 'Rear Window'. Who is he?
4. Every reviewer's favourite film is the one where the thespian-murderer Vincent Price disposes of eight drama critics. What is the film called?
5. Eight more victims, all aristocratic and all played by Alec Guinness, fall to Dennis Price in a celebrated 1949 Ealing black comedy. What was their family name?
6. Although the two incidents are not

thought to be related, an Italian director was murdered in 1975 not long after the public exhibition of his last film was banned by the GLC. Who was he?

7. James Stewart, John Wayne and Lee Marvin all star in 'The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance'. But which of them did it?

8. Bob Rafelson and Tay Garnett have both made US versions of the murder mystery 'The Postman Always Rings Twice'. But which European director borrowed the story first, for his debut film of 1942?

9. In which film did circumstances force Charlie Chaplin to become a mass wife-murderer?

10. Today's best-known fictional serial killer, Dr Hannibal Lecter of 'The Silence of the Lambs', made his screen debut in 1986. What was the film, and who played the cannibal psychiatrist?

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EXTERMINATE ALL RATIONAL THOUGHT

NAKED LUNCH

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PRODUCTION DESIGNER CAROL SPIER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY PETER SUSCHITZKY COSTUME DESIGNER DENISE CRONENBERG EDITED BY RONALD SANDERS
MUSIC BY HOWARD SHORE CO-PRODUCER GABRIELLA MARTINELLI BASED ON THE BOOK BY WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS
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